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MILITARY AFFAIRS

MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No. 9, September 1983

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4 January 1984

USSR REPORT

MILITARY AFFAIRS

MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No. 9, September 1983

Except where indicated otherwise in the table of contents the following is a complete translation of the Russian-language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICER SELF-STUDY, EDUCATION GIVEN

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 10-19

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Army Gen P. Lashchenko: "The Self-Improvement of a Military Leader"]

[Text] As the experience of previous wars shows, victory on the battlefields was usually won by troops led by courageous and talented military leaders, who had an excellent knowledge of military affairs and were able to quickly analyze the situation, grasp the enemy's plans, take correct decisions and constantly carry them out.

Knowledge and command qualities are gained by a military leader, they are developed and improved over all his service: in military schools, during the period of practical activities in the troops under the leadership of senior chiefs and in the process of continuous and intense work with oneself. The latter, in our opinion, plays the primary role both in the establishing and in the subsequent growth of a military leader's professional skills. As is well known, Mar SU G. K. Zhukov did not have a higher military education, but due to constant independent work achieved the heights of military leadership art.

By the self-improvement of a military leader, we understand the planned activities of a general, admiral or officer to improve his mental, moral, volitional, physical and other qualities. This is expressed in systematic, constant work aimed at achieving the set goal. Supervision over the course and results of the work is provided by the person himself. Here the effectiveness of all his efforts depends basically upon his abilities, will power, activeness, organization and the ability to rationally utilize time. As practice shows, after the very first tangible results in self-improvement, the incentives also grow for a further activation of these activities.

A bent for self-improvement is manifested primarily in the habit of being constantly improved for the breadth of one's viewpoint and in working constantly with oneself. This is a complex psychological phenomenon. It expresses many human traits, such as will power, inclinations, purposefulness, concentration and industriousness.

Important significance has been given to self-improvement by the founders of scientific communism, by the leaders of the Communist Party, by the outstanding military leaders of the past and prominent contemporary military chiefs. Thus, in one of his works K. Marx wrote that "man can achieve his perfection only by working...."¹

V. I. Lenin viewed self-improvement as an important condition of preparing for any serious practical activity. In one of his appeals to the youth, he pointed out: "Endeavor to make self-education the main goal of your organization...."²

The Communist Party has always given and does give great attention to the all-round preparation of the leadership. In order not to fall behind life, all our cadres should constantly study, raise their ideological-theoretical level and master the achievements of science and advanced practice.

This obliges each military leader to work systematically with himself in the aim of constantly deepening his knowledge and developing practical skills. If the theory and practice of military affairs is not studied independently day in and day out, if will power is not tempered and if other command qualities are not developed, then one will never rise to the level of the demands made and one will always remain an ordinary person.

The self-improvement of a military leader assumes particular significance under present-day conditions. The equipping of the troops with new types of weapons and combat equipment and the rapid and continuous development of military theory--all of this places high demands on the officers and generals and increases the importance of their systematic self-education. The member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Minister of Defense, Mar SU D. F. Ustinov, at the 6th All-Army Conference of Primary Party Organization Secretaries described in detail those qualities which a Soviet military leader now requires most. These are competence, a heightened feeling for the new, and the capacity to assume responsibility for carrying out complex tasks, to promptly spot and support initiative and to mobilize the will and energy of the personnel. The specific features of troop control, said D. F. Ustinov, make it essential for him to also have certain additional qualities. The essence of them is that any rank of military leader must be able to reason and act with an extremely rigid time limit and under enormous moral-psychological and physical stresses.³

In history there was probably not a single outstanding military leader who was not concerned with self-improvement. All talented military leaders were successful because they knew their strongpoints and made maximum use of their gifts on the battlefields. But they also remembered their shortcomings and endeavored to avoid them. The constant broadening of their military theoretical viewpoint helped them rise to the level of the tasks confronting them and to correctly analyze those problems which arose, while practical experience as it was acquired made it possible for them to evermore skillfully command the troops in defeating the enemy. Theory and practice are interrelated. In working with oneself, with a skillful combination of theoretical and practical activities, the entire complex of qualities needed by a military leader is improved.

The book "Nauka Pobezhdad" [The Science of Winning] by A. V. Suvorov can rightly be called a manual on military self-improvement. The procedures of self-improvement of A. V. Suvorov himself were very instructive and original in their uniqueness. Until the last days of his life, he was constantly engaged in self-education, devoting all his free time to this. He did not restrict himself to studying works on military art but also had a good knowledge of mathematics, geography, physics, history and devoted a good deal of time to the study of foreign languages. The Soviet military leaders M. V. Frunze, B. M. Shaposhnikov, M. N. Tukhachevskiy and A. I. Yegorov also excelled in diverse knowledge and great creative abilities. The high military training acquired by them in the process of intense labor made it possible not only to successfully lead the combat activities of large operational field forces but also profoundly work out the most important problems of military theory.

In emphasizing the necessity of constant, systematic work in self-education, M. V. Frunze pointed out that "this is an obligation of all commanders without exception. The one who does not do this very soon will be behind the flank and in this instance should blame only himself."⁴ In speaking to military academy graduates, he said: "Only those of you who feel constant dissatisfaction with yourself...will not fall behind in military affairs and will be ahead...."⁵

All the outstanding Soviet military leaders from the period of the Great Patriotic War were also constantly concerned with self-education. They profoundly studied military history, the principles of military science, they constantly followed the development of military equipment both in our nation and abroad, they tested out the regulations in exercises and drills with the troops and the staffs, they constantly studied themselves and effectively taught their subordinates. All of this added to their knowledge and helped improve command qualities.

In his book "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya" [Remembrances and Reflections], Mar SU G. K. Zhukov writes: "Being the commander of the VI Corps, I worked hard on operational-strategic questions since I felt that I had not achieved much in this area. I was clearly aware that a modern corps commander had to know a very great deal and work intensely on mastering the military sciences. In reading historical materials about wars of the past, the classics of military art and diverse memoir literature, I endeavored to draw conclusions on the nature of modern warfare, modern operations and engagements. I gained particularly much from my personal working out of operational-tactical assignments for conducting divisional and corps command games, command-staff exercises, troop exercises and so forth."⁶

Gen N. F. Vatutin can also serve as an example of how to work with oneself. Let me merely quote the words said by him in a talk with Gen K. V. Kraynyukov: "...Again I am re-reading the little volume of works by Frunze.... Each time I find ever-new and useful advice. Mikhail Vasil'yevich Frunze was a great man and a prominent Marxist. How profoundly he thought and promoted military affairs! And how concerned he was that our troops be headed by intelligent, educated command personnel who had a good knowledge of military affairs and were politically and morally advanced."⁷

Mar SU R. Ya. Malinovskiy was also an example in this regard. Everybody could envy his exceptional capacity for work and industriousness, his breadth and depth of interests. Rodion Yakovlevich [Malinovskiy] sacrificed the time set aside for recreation and recovery for profound self-education. He was able to combine intense service activities with, as he put it, active recreation. He read a great deal, devoting every spare minute to this. His love for literature enriched him spiritually so much that, while already a famous military leader, he picked up the pen to tell about what he experienced and then wrote the book "Soldaty rossii" [Soldiers of Russia] which is very vivid and unique in its language and style.

Over all his more than half-century of military service, Rodion Yakovlevich systematically studied military affairs. This made it possible for him to skillfully borrow from past experience everything that could be taken up in his diverse activities under new conditions. He skillfully utilized the acquired knowledge and rich combat experience in directing the troops on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War.

Mar SU A. V. Vasilevskiy pointed out that for him, having completed the accelerated program at the Alexander Military School during World War I, it was necessary to work hard over all his service. During all these years he was intensely concerned with self-education, and never feared if he simply had to say to a subordinate that he did not know about this question but would certainly try to find out and give an answer in the next few days.

The Soviet military leaders continued to be concerned with self-education in the course of the war as well. Many of them in a difficult combat situation often re-read the required regulations, instructions and textbooks on military affairs. The following episode comes to mind. In the summer of 1942, the 60th Army was fighting hard in the area of Voronezh. The 38th Army was fighting to the right. The commander of the 60th Army, Gen I. D. Chernyakhovskiy ordered me to resolve certain questions of cooperation with the commander of the 38th Army (it was then under the command of Lt Gen N. Ye. Chibisov whom I had known from prewar joint service in the Odessa Military District). When we had "settled" all the questions of cooperation, N. Ye. Chibisov suddenly began to recollect how we had been involved in combat and operational training before the war. Then he pointed out that in a war all categories of officers and generals must constantly study the tactics of their own and enemy troops. Having opened up a large iron box, he pulled out a stack of books and, in slowly going through them, began to give a brief description of each. One book (it was a study of tactics which had been employed in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902) particularly caught my attention and out loud I expressed my surprise that it would be of any use. N. Ye. Chibisov replied that in it was very useful experience which could and must be used in the course of the battles with the Nazi occupiers. During the period of the Great Patriotic War, N. Ye. Chibisov successfully commanded the troops of a number of all-arms armies and later headed the Military Academy imeni M. V. Frunze. The basis of his success in combat and service activities was his high and complete military preparation which he continuously improved.

A significant part of the Soviet military leaders who were relatively young prior to the start of the Great Patriotic War also possessed good theoretical

training. However, in their majority before the war they had occupied command positions for a short period of time and did not have combat experience. Self-education on the front served them particularly well. When they had acquired experience in organizing and controlling the troops in combat and an operation, they began very successfully to command large formations and operational field forces.

A commander's character is shaped and tempered significantly faster in a difficult combat situation, particularly for gifted and industrious people. Gen I. D. Chernyakhovskiy can serve as an example in this regard. Exceptional abilities determined his rapid advance in service. Nevertheless he worked constantly in improving his military knowledge. I. D. Chernyakhovskiy did this with unusual tenacity. He was never without manuals and regulations, works by military theoreticians, the most valuable aids on tactics and operational art, creatively using the useful recommendations contained in them. He studied not only Soviet literature but also carefully followed the views of foreign authors who were specialists in military affairs. With particular care he studied the official theories on the combat employment of tanks, artillery and aviation.

In the course of the last war, as is known, the positive experience of troop combat was generalized in detail on the fronts. Then it was disseminated in the form of instructions, reports and memoranda. I. D. Chernyakhovskiy gave particular attention to this question. On his instructions, the experience of the conducted operations was generalized by the army staff. The commander himself was the first to be acquainted with this, and after this he gave instructions on how this should be used in the army troops in preparing and conducting the next operation.

As experience shows, the forming of a military leader occurs in the process of a great strain on mental, moral and physical forces. This is quite understandable. To study military affairs properly, as V. I. Lenin urged, means to constantly master all the achievements in this area, to skillfully use the recommendations of military science in practical activities, to always see the long run and to constantly improve the habits and experience of troop control in their carrying out of tasks under a difficult situation. For this reason with full justification it can be asserted that the process of self-improvement includes all the effective forms and methods suitable for increasing knowledge and gaining the necessary professional experience.

The primary basis of self-improvement is the profound mastery of Marxist-Leninist theory and a continuous rise in philosophical and methodological knowledge. This provides an opportunity to form a scientific ideology and makes it possible to understand the specific patterns of armed combat, to consciously employ in practice the principles of the organizational development of the armed forces and military art, troop training and indoctrination, as well as successfully lead subordinates. Precisely the Marxist-Leninist ideology, states the documents of the June (1983) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, makes the communists and workers political fighters capable of independently assessing social phenomena and to see the relationship of current tasks with our ultimate aims.⁸

The continuous and rapid development of military affairs, the diversity of the forms and methods of conducting combat operations and the constant outfitting of the troops with new, more complex combat equipment demand on the part of the military leader a constant and systematic rise in operational-tactical and military-technical knowledge. As practice shows, a greater operational-tactical viewpoint is achieved as a result of constant, systematic work in studying the regulations, manuals and other guidance documents. The basic mass of military-type information is to be found in the military-theoretical works, monographs and textbooks. A majority of them should become desk references for the military leader. Active participation in scientific research also helps greatly in improving professional skills.

A knowledge of the history of wars and military art is of great importance in the self-improvement of a military leader. This is explained by the fact that all modern provisions in the theory of Soviet military science in the area of organizational development of the armed forces, military art, troop training and indoctrination are based on rich historical experience acquired by mankind over many centuries, and particularly the experience of the heroic military history of the Soviet state. It must be said that all outstanding military leaders, as a rule, have profoundly studied the lessons of previous wars, endeavoring to draw correct conclusions for the future from them. For example, A. V. Suvorov by his twenties had independently studied the history of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Prince de Conde and other famous military leaders of the past. Subsequently, in going with particular interest into the secrets of military art and particularly Russian, he demanded the same from his officers.

Very many Soviet officers also study in detail the history of wars and military art and not only in school as a required subject but also independently. This brings undoubted benefit. The commander of our Moscow Proletariy Rifle Division, L. G. Petrovskiy, comes to mind. He in the same late 1930's systematically studied military history and particularly the operations of World War I and the Civil War. He demanded this from us as well, the then young commanders, and even set up unique contests for who knew various questions of military history best. L. G. Petrovskiy often gave reports and lectures which thoroughly analyzed the course and results of individual operations of the past and each time drew very useful conclusions for improving the training of the commanders, the staffs and the troops. In the course of the Great Patriotic War he skillfully directed the combat operations of rifle corps formations.

Without a profound scientific analysis of the largest engagements, particularly the operations of the Great Patriotic War, and correct conclusions from them, it is impossible to understand either the course of development of military art or the paths and means of achieving victory. Here again it is wise to recall the words of V. I. Lenin that for studying the essence of a question, it is essential "to look at each question from the viewpoint of how a certain phenomenon arose in history, what are the main stages that this phenomenon went through in its development and from the viewpoint of this development to see what the given thing has now become."⁹

A study of the history of wars and military art at present is assuming particular significance due to the fact that in the Armed Forces the number of

participants of past wars is constantly declining. Regardless of the fact that independent work holds the main place in studying the history of wars and military art, the role of military chiefs in this process is increased since they must help subordinate officers correctly analyze and utilize the invaluable combat experience.

A knowledge of the history of wars arouses in military leaders a desire to be the worthy followers of the most famous military chiefs of their fatherland. Certainly the best known military leaders have always endeavored to be equal to their great predecessors or at least like them. A. V. Suvorov on this question said: "Take as the model a hero of ancient times, observe him, follow him, equal him, outstrip him and there will be more than enough glory for you." The realization of this dream was aided by the circumstance that many prominent military chiefs left behind scientific works and memoirs which set forward their views on the organization and conduct of combat, an operation and a war as a whole. These works have played a significant role in the development of military art. They have been profoundly studied and used in practice by many prominent military chiefs of later times. Nor have they lost their value now, being a treasurehouse of talented military thought.

War provides extensive factual material for theoretical analysis and the elaboration of new concepts on various questions of military affairs. Here, undoubtedly, it is not a question of copying any individual procedures or forms of combat operations and not seeking out characteristic examples from the combat experience of the troops or the activities of commanders which might confirm the conclusions and recommendations of one or another military chief, which is sometimes also useful. It is much more important to take from combat experience all that is required for preparing the troops for future battles and operations and which remains suitable for use under the conditions of present-day war. Here it is very wise to recall the words said by V. I. Lenin at the 8th RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Congress: "...I have viewed the past only from the viewpoint of what is needed tomorrow or the day after for our policy."¹⁰ This applies fully to the use of the combat experience of previous wars as well.

In the course of the last war, many Soviet military chiefs set examples of high military art. A careful study of the operations and battles conducted by them and the greatest possible use of their very rich military experience are one of the most important conditions in the self-improvement of military leaders.

At present, the best conditions have been created for a thorough study of the acquired combat experience. Many major works, books, dissertations and various publications are devoted to the history of wars and military arts. The documentary materials of past wars have been systematized in the archives. Major sources of knowledge are also such works as "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945 gg." [The History of World War II of 1939-1945] and the Soviet Military Encyclopedia. These are truly an arsenal of knowledge and experience, particularly on the questions of military art. The memoirs of prominent military leaders also contain much that is useful on analyzing the operations of the Great Patriotic War. All this wealth requires a careful re-thinking and detailed study, particularly by that category of military leaders which does

not yet have personal combat experience. Excursions into military history and a profound study of previous battles and engagements help them more tangibly feel combat reality and at the same time broaden their viewpoint, help develop thinking and provide an opportunity to anticipate the development of combat operations under analogous conditions.

It is particularly useful to study past combat experience from the materials of front and army operations, operational and combat documents which reliably set out in detail the decisions of the military leaders and the actions of their subordinate troops. Their value for the researchers consists in the fact that they make it possible to analyze the evolution of the searches for the way to victory as well as the shortcomings of individual decisions and the miscalculations of certain military chiefs and determine at what price the achieved successes were achieved.

A detailed study of the decisions and the plans as well as a stage-by-stage (as stated in the combat forms of the armies and formations) examination of the course of battles and engagements not only expands the picture of combat operations but also provides a full notion of them and makes it possible to compare the situations and positions in which the troops were fighting, to hone analytical thinking and become, as it were, a co-participant of those ancient events.

An analysis of the combat operations of the past and a thoughtful comparison of the various factors and examples in them provide an opportunity to make valuable generalizations which can serve as the basis for correct forecasts for the future. For instance, if in the future new forms and methods of combat operations can arise and new types of combat equipment be employed (which are judged in the future to play a particularly important role in the operations and in the war as a whole), these new features can be foreseen only on the basis of a profound knowledge of the development history of military affairs, weapons and combat equipment.

Research in the area of military history makes it possible to trace all the changes in the methods of conducting both wars as a whole as well as major operations, engagements and individual battles and to spot particular features in the use of the types of weapons and branches of troops as well as the individual models of weapons and combat equipment. Here it is essential to consider that much which occurred in the last war could also occur in a future one, particularly in conducting combat operations using conventional weapons. For this reason, along with the development of the new forms and methods of combat operations, considering the changes which have occurred, it is essential to study and assimilate the most effective forms and methods which have been successfully applied in the past war. The combat experience gained by the blood of our soldiers and commanders will undoubtedly serve as an additional arsenal of military skill and high morale for the personnel of the Soviet Armed Forces.

The military leaders must also have a good knowledge of the combat experience of foreign armies as acquired during the years of World War II. They should be familiar with works by foreign military historians and theoreticians and representatives of different military schools. V. I. Lenin cautioned: "...The conduct of that army which does not prepare to master all types of weapons, all means and procedures of combat which the enemy can have is irrational or even

criminal."¹¹ In truth, one must approach critically the works published abroad, since a majority of bourgeois historians intentionally falsify the course of military operations and show the lessons of military history in a distorted light.

A study of the probable enemy is of important significance in the process of the self-improvement of the military leader, since without a thorough knowledge of his weapons, technical equipping, the organizational structure of the troops and their tactics, it is impossible to effectively prepare and conduct a battle and operation. It is essential to also consider the circumstance that the enemy is constantly improving its weapons and combat equipment and bettering the organizational structure of the troops. Tactics also change under various situational conditions. The armies of probable enemies are studied by the military leader in the process of becoming familiar with the works of foreign military authors, periodicals, official manuals as well as in the course of exercises, training and military games.

Certainly, the history of wars and military art cannot provide precise answers and specific recommendations for all the questions of interest to the military leader. This applies particularly to the problems of preparing and conducting combat and an operation in a modern war, particularly with the use of weapons of mass destruction. Of course, this is not its task. It is already enough that military history helps disclose the ways and means of achieving victory considering previous experience. It provides an opportunity to extract all the best and advanced from the past for its creative use in the future.

In the self-improvement of a military leader, a major role is played by studying the theaters of war. Here it is important to know the terrain, the composition of the population, the economy, climatic conditions, capacity, the military installations of the enemy fighting here, as this has direct bearing on the combat operations of friendly and enemy troops.

Among the important tasks in the self-improvement of a military leader a significant place is held by the mastery of educational skills based upon a thorough assimilation of military pedagogics, psychology and advanced training and indoctrination methods. Here success in improving training methods is directly dependent upon the degree of understanding the nature of various training methods and their specific development and mutual enrichment. A desire to develop the skills of independent work and the creative abilities of subordinates has been and remains one of the main areas for the procedural work of a military leader.

The educational skills of a military leader and the procedural habits of subordinates are improved in the course of conducting various combat training measures such as battle drill and command-staff exercises, commander exercises, troop training, lectures and reports, demonstration and instructor-procedural exercises, seminars and talks, meetings and instruction sessions.

In continuing his work in the area of self-improvement, the military leader must inculcate a love for this in his subordinate officers. This task is important, complicated and painstaking. It cannot be carried out by a mere order, directive or instruction. It must be considered that some officers want and

know now to work independently, a second group also like to but does not have the skill, while a third group is unable and moreover does not want to work independently. Consequently, in instilling a desire for self-improvement in subordinates, the officers must be approached individually, considering the particular features of each. Some must be persuaded of the need to systematically add to their knowledge, another group must be taught to utilize the most effective forms and methods of work independently while still others must have indoctrinational work conducted with them systematically. To give individual assignments for self-preparation and conduct officer meetings and conferences on exchanging experience in independent work. It is extremely important to constantly and effectively monitor all of this.

A most important task for the military leader is to develop the high work efficiency and endurance which will be required by a future war. In the course of the last war a majority of the Soviet military chiefs endured enormous mental, psychological and physical strains, while maintaining high work efficiency and acuteness of thought. But there were also those for whom such stresses were unbearable. For this reason, the military leader must prepare himself ahead of time for the forthcoming stresses. Work efficiency and endurance are developed by constant training in the process of all practical activity, with the corresponding working conditions and physical and psychological stresses.

The pedagogue K. D. Ushinskiy wrote that the most essential, most human need in man is the need for improvement and development. However, such a demand must still be awakened and established in systematic and serious work. High self-awareness helps set such a goal for the Soviet officer or general. It is shaped under the effect of the communist ideology and a feeling of duty.

The prime prerequisite for self-improvement is a thorough and objective assessment of one's abilities and the level of theoretical knowledge, character traits and practical experience. Very useful on this level is the self-critical and dispassionate comparison of one's command qualities with those possessed by the military leaders of previous times. The self-evaluation should not be general but rather as concrete as possible. Dissatisfaction with what has been done and a desire for the better are a spring (incentive) in the process of self-improvement.

The effectiveness of independent work depends largely upon personal organization and the ability to utilize the most effective forms and methods of work. For systematic work with oneself, time is needed. A military leader whose official duties are vast and diverse at times actually does not have enough time in the day to do everything planned. Nevertheless, he should seek out opportunities for self-improvement. Here is what Mar SU S. S. Biryuzov said about his prewar service: "One must measure labor not by time but rather by the amount done. Fatigue was forgotten and it always seemed that...something important still could be done."¹²

Of great importance is the ability to correctly allocate one's working time. Proceeding from my own personal experience in the positions of a commander of field forces, I can rather responsibly say that if a correct style of work and leadership over the service of subordinates is developed, if they are not constantly interfered with, if one's workday is filled to the limit and if

frequent and long meetings are excluded, it is then possible to find sufficient time for self-improvement.

The CPSU Central Committee has shown constant concern for the improvement of the Armed Forces command personnel and has created unlimited opportunities for their mastery of the required knowledge in all areas of military affairs.

The Soviet military leaders to whom complacency and conceit are alien always thirst for ever-new knowledge, since military theory and practice are constantly developing and in no instance can one lag behind them.

Each Soviet military leader is aware that his basic purpose is to successfully carry out complex combat missions in the course of a possible war. The better he prepares for this in peacetime the more successfully he will justify the high confidence shown in him.

FOOTNOTES

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 40, p 7.

² V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 7, p 66.

³ KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 12 May 1982.

⁴ M. V. Frunze, "Izbrannyye proizvedeniya" [Selected Works], Voenizdat, 1965, p 264.

⁵ M. V. Frunze, "Izbrannyye proizvedeniya," Vol 2, Voenizdat, 1957, p 127.

⁶ G. K. Zhukov, "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya" [Remembrances and Reflections], Moscow, Izd-vo APN, 1969, p 154.

⁷ "Pokovodtsy i voyenachal'niki Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Military Leaders of the Great Patriotic War], 2d Revised Edition, Moscow, Molodaya gvardiya, 1971, p 66.

⁸ See: PRAVDA, 15 June 1983.

⁹ V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 39, p 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol 38, p 136.

¹¹ Ibid., Vol 41, p 81.

¹² M. T. Chernyshev, K. Ya. Chermashentsev, "Zhizn'--Rodine" [A Life for the Motherland], Moscow, Politizdat, 1974, p 33.

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WORLD WAR II DEFENSIVE FIRE PLANS REVIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 20-24

[Article by Col L. Zaytsev: "Fire Damage to the Enemy on the Defensive (From the Experience of the Great Patriotic War)"]

[Text] The organization and execution of fire damage against the enemy on the defensive in the course of the Great Patriotic War underwent essential changes. These were caused primarily by the quantitative and qualitative growth of the weapons and by the change in the conditions of the going over of the troops to the defensive. Also of importance was the combat experience of the command and the troops.

In the summer-autumn campaign of 1941, troops went over to the defensive frequently in a difficult situation with insufficient time to organize the defenses. Under these conditions, the fire of small arms and the artillery as well as air strikes were poorly coordinated between themselves as well as with the mixed minefields.

In the second and third periods of the war, there was a sharp rise in the fire capability of the units and formations. Ordinarily the troops went over to the defensive under better conditions than before. The superior commanders, the commanders and the staffs in a majority of instances possessed sufficient time to organize the defenses.

In the plan to organize fire damage, specific tasks began to be set for the artillery and aviation in conducting counterpreparations, in repelling enemy attacks, in fighting in depth and in making counterstrikes and counterattacks. Great attention was given to the use of tanks, SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and mixed minefields.

Fire damage to the enemy preparing to go over to an offensive was carried out by artillery softening up. In 1941-1942, this was carried out, as a rule, on narrow sectors involving a small number of guns and mortars. In the Vyazma Defensive Operation of 1941, for example, 267 guns and mortars were used for the softening up in the zone of the 16th Army and 38 in the zone of the 19th Army.¹ In the zone of the 20th Army, softening up was planned in two sectors using, respectively, 37 and 58 guns.² On the Leningrad Front in the defensive

zone of the 13th Rifle Division of the 42th Army, on 24 September 1941, a 15-minute artillery softening up was carried out. Some 130 guns were involved in it.⁴ Regardless of the insignificant forces and the limited consumption of ammunition in the course of the softening up carried out both at Moscow and at Leningrad, the enemy suffered tangible harm and the force of its strike was weakened.

Artillery softening up was repeatedly carried out during the defensive period of the Battle of Stalingrad. For example, there was a rather strong softening up in the zone of the 62d Army conducted on 5 October 1942 against the infantry and tanks of two enemy divisions. Involved in this were over 300 guns and mortars and it lasted 40 minutes. As a result, the enemy suffered significant losses and was able to resume the offensive only 5 days after replenishing and regrouping the troops.⁵

The most effective was the artillery counterpreparations in the Battle of Kursk conducted in the defensive zones of the Central and Voronezh Fronts. On the Central Front, this was carried out in the zone of the 13th Army and on the flanks of the 48th and 70th Armies, and on the Voronezh Front in the zones of the 6th and 7th Guards Armies. Involved in the counterpreparations were: 595 guns and mortars and 2 rocket artillery regiments in the 13th Army, 555 guns and mortars and 88 rocket artillery combat vehicles in the 6th Guards Army, and 696 guns and mortars and 47 rocket artillery vehicles in the 7th Guards Army. The length of the counterpreparations, for example, in the 13th Army was 30 minutes and ammunition consumption was 0.25 units of fire. In the zone of this field force, 90 artillery batteries and 60 observation posts were neutralized, 6 ammunition dumps were blown up, and up to 3 infantry regiments were scattered and partially destroyed. The enemy was able to commence the offensive 2.5 hours later than the designated time. In the zone of the 6th Guards Army, as a result of carrying out counterpreparations, 10 artillery batteries were neutralized, 14 observation points were destroyed, up to 50 tanks were hit and up to 4,000 soldiers and officers were killed and wounded. The offensive by the Nazi troops in this sector commenced 3 hours later than the stipulated time.⁶ Simultaneously with the artillery counterpreparations, 132 ground attack planes and 285 fighters from the 2d and 17th Air Armies simultaneously attacked 8 enemy airfields and destroyed 60 aircraft.⁷

The basic enemy losses by all types of fire were suffered during the period its troops went over to the attack and in the fight for the main defensive zone. In the first period of the war, the chief role in destroying enemy personnel, particularly on the approaches to the forward defensive edge, was assigned to small arms. However, the great width of the defensive zones in the summer of 1941 did not make it possible to obtain a sufficient fire density. As an average it reached not more than 1.2-1.6 bullet per linear meter of front per minute.

The even placement of the artillery on the defensive led to a situation where the density for field guns and mortars usually was just 5-18 units and for anti-tank guns 1-4 pieces per kilometer of front.⁸ Artillery fire was planned, as a rule, only ahead of the forward edge. In the defensive zones of the armies and divisions, due to the extremely limited amount of ammunition, creeping defensive fire (PZO) was used very rarely.

Under the conditions of the air supremacy of enemy aviation, the air forces of the fronts were forced to pay basic attention to combating the air enemy. For this reason, in the summer of 1941, only around 25 percent of all the aircraft sorties were used for attacking the advancing enemy troops.⁹ By the autumn of 1941, aviation was strengthening its attacks against enemy ground troops. Thus, in the Battle of Moscow, in the retreat of our troops to the Mozhaysk Defensive Line during the period from 30 September to 10 October, it made 8,500 aircraft sorties, including 68 percent for supporting the ground troops.¹⁰ In the course of the subsequent combat operations, the aviation under the command of the commanders of the fronts further increased the strikes against the ground enemy. However, the basic method of supporting the troops on the defensive was sporadic combat sorties by small-sized (6-9) aircraft groups. The air strikes were not sufficiently coordinated with the operations of the ground troops and because of this the air forces commander in his directive pointed out that they could not effectively influence the outcome of the defensive battles or to a sufficient degree ease the situation of the ground troops.¹¹

During the first period of the war, mixed minefields were set out in front of the forward edge or in individual areas on roads, often without any relation to the overall operational-tactical situation.¹²

The desire to cause the greatest losses to the enemy in the defensive operations of the subsequent periods led to an increased massing of weapons on the crucial sectors and consequently to their greater density. Thus, in the Battle of Kursk in the sector of the expected main enemy strike in the zone of the 13th Army, the artillery density was (considering the antitank cannons) 105 guns, mortars and rocket artillery combat vehicles per kilometer of front. This was the maximum artillery density on the defensive in the course of the entire war.

For hitting tanks as they moved up to the attack line and in going over to the attack on probable tank approaches, a PZO was prepared and the large caliber field artillery was primarily used in setting this. The effectiveness of such a method of fire was confirmed in the course of the defensive engagements at Kursk. Just on 5 July 1943, the 32d Howitzer Brigade by twice setting a PZO thwarted the attack of enemy tanks in the zone of the 148th Rifle Division of the 13th Army. The artillery of the 6th Guards Army by PZO hit 12 tanks out of the 50 advancing ones in one of the sectors. In the zone of the 7th Guards Army, in conducting a PZO, 27 tanks out of the 60 advancing ones were hit.¹³ For hitting tanks and cutting them off from the infantry, fixed barrage fire was also prepared and conducted and concentrated fire against the assembly areas and deployment lines of the infantry and tanks.

The importance of small arms fire was also not reduced in hitting the enemy during the period of its attack. The echeloned configuration of the troop battle formations made it possible to create a deeper fire plan and its organization was based upon the principle of massing the weapons in the most important sectors. Going over on the defensive to creating a system of trenches and communications trenches made it possible in the combat for the main zone to widely maneuver the weapons of the rifle subunits. The fire plan of small arms became more viable, active and flexible. The increased number of automatic weapons and the reduced width of the defensive zone made it possible to

bring the fire density up to 10 bullets per linear meter of front per minute. The troops began to more widely practice volley fire, particularly in cutting off the enemy infantry from the tanks, in firing at low-flying aircraft and in conducting concentrated fire. Snipers began to be more active. On individual, independent sectors, along with artillery and mortar fire, sectors were designated for concentrated small arms fire and lines for fixed barrage fire by medium machine guns. Thus, in the defensive at Kursk in the 36th Guards Rifle Division, 23 such areas were planned and in the 39th Guards Rifle Division 22 of them.¹⁴

Air support for the ground troops was also improved. The quantitative and qualitative growth of aviation and its successes in the fight for air supremacy provided an opportunity to spend significantly more aircraft sorties on troop support. In the Battle of Kursk, the number of airplanes in the groups attacking the enemy increased up to 30-40 planes (the 2d Air Army, Voronezh Front), due to which the effectiveness of air operations rose significantly.¹⁵

Mixed minefields began to be more widely employed. In laying the obstacles, the antipersonnel mines were set, as a rule, only ahead of the forward edge. The antitank mines were employed differently. Some 50-60 percent of the mines were assigned for laying minefields ahead of the forward edge and within the first position, 20-30 percent were used for mining terrain deep in the main zone while 10-20 percent were left as a reserve for maneuvering in the course of battle. The mixed minefields being set were coordinated with the fire plan of artillery and small arms. The mining density was significantly increased. For example, in preparing for the defensive in the Battle of Kursk in the zone of the 13th Army, 254 minefields were set with an average mining density of 1,500 antitank mines per kilometer and 1,700 antipersonnel mines.¹⁶

In the operations of 1944-1945, in repelling enemy attacks, the artillery had an opportunity to set fixed barrage fire ahead of the entire defensive front and on individual major sectors to carry this out with a double or even triple density in shell consumption.

By creating a zone of solid small arms fire ahead of the forward edge and before the front of the rifle battalions deep in the defenses, its effectiveness was significantly increased and the fire density reached 12 bullets per linear meter per minute. At the same time the depth of the solid small arms fire zone declined somewhat (from 400 to 200 m) as this began to be basically created by the firing of machine pistols (submachine guns).

During the third period of the war, the mixed minefields continued to play an important role in causing the enemy losses ahead of the forward edge. For example, in the Balaton Defensive Operation the mining density in individual areas reached 2,700 antitank mines per kilometer of front and 2,500 antipersonnel mines. On the minefields set the enemy in the course of the offensive lost 133 tanks and assault guns, 14 armored personnel carriers, 9 guns, 8 motor vehicles and around 2,500 soldiers and officers.¹⁷

During the period of preparing and conducting counterattacks and counterstrikes the enemy suffered significant losses from all types of fire. Thus, for the fire support for a counterstrike by the 64th Army conducted on 9 August 1942,

396 guns and mortars were involved and this made it possible to create a density of around 40 guns and mortars per kilometer of front. The army counterstrike was supported by aviation of the 8th Air Army. This provided an opportunity to cause the enemy significant losses (up to 3 infantry regiments were defeated and around 100 tanks hit) and to restore the defenses along the external defensive perimeter of Stalingrad.¹⁸

In the subsequent periods of the war for preparing and supporting the counterattacks and counterstrikes, significantly more artillery began to be assigned and aviation began to be called in even more widely. Small arms were also employed more effectively. For example, for supporting the counterattack by the 307th Rifle Division of the 13th Army which was conducted on 8 July 1943 in the course of the defensive operation at Kursk, up to 300 guns, mortars and rocket artillery combat vehicles were employed. The counterattack was preceded by massed intense shelling and artillery support was provided by the method of successive concentration of fire and fire at individual targets. This significantly ensured the success of the counterattack and the enemy suffered high losses and was forced to retreat from the northern part of Ponyri. In conducting a counterstrike on 6 July in the region of Butyrki, Gnilushi, Saborovka by the forces of the 13th Army and the XVI Tank Corps, 908 guns, 637 mortars and more than 200 rocket artillery units were involved. In addition, the aviation of the Central Front thrice made concentrated strikes by groups up to 140 aircraft against the enemy grouping.¹⁹

In the concluding stage of the war, for fire damage to the enemy in the period of counterattacks and counterstrikes, the artillery density was brought up to 40-60 guns and mortars per kilometer. The counterstrikes usually were preceded by artillery softening up lasting 20-30 minutes and counterattacks by 10-15 minutes of intense shelling. Support for the counterattacking infantry and tanks was initially provided by the successive concentration of fire to a depth of 2-3 km and then by concentrated fire and firing at individual targets.²⁰

In conclusion it is essential to point out that the increased strength and activeness of the defenses of the Soviet troops during the Great Patriotic War were related primarily to their constantly increasing capability for fire damage to the enemy. Over the entire war, there was an ongoing quantitative growth and qualitative improvement in the weapons. The forms and methods of their combat employment were also improved. The transition from an even distribution of weapons along the entire defensive front to their decisive massing in the main sectors made it possible to cause to the enemy attack groupings such losses which significantly weakened the strength of their attack.

In the configuration of the fire plan there was a tendency to achieve the full use of the combat capabilities of all types of weapons and this has not lost its importance at present.

FOOTNOTES

¹ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 208, inv. 21350, file 2, sheets 72-74.

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- ³ "Boyevyye deystviya 42-y armii i oborona putey soobshcheniya v bitve za Leningrad" [Combat Operations of the 42d Army and the Defense of the Lines of Communications in the Battle for Leningrad], Moscow, Izd. Voennoy akademii im. M. V. Frunze, 1975, pp 14-15.
- ⁴ [Not in text]
- ⁵ TsAMO, folio 345, inv. 5487, file 48, sheets 182-185.
- ⁶ "Artilleriya v oboronitel'nykh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Artillery in Defensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Book II, Voenizdat, 1961, p 160.
- ⁷ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 145.
- ⁸ "Razvitiye taktiki Sukhoputnykh Voysk v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [The Development of Ground Forces Tactics in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Izd. Voennoy akademii im. M. V. Frunze, 1981, pp 180, 183.
- ⁹ I. V. Timokhov, "Operativnoye iskusstvo Sovetskikh VVS v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе" [Operational Art of the Soviet Air Forces in the Great Patriotic War], Voenizdat, 1976, p 217.
- ¹⁰ "Sovetskiye Voenno-Vozdushnyy Sily v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе 1941-1945 gg." [The Soviet Air Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1968, p 69.
- ¹¹ TsAMO, folio 35, inv. 30802, file 10, sheet 76.
- ¹² "Sbornik boyevykh dokumentov Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War], No 5, Moscow, 1947, p 26.
- ¹³ "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Voenizdat, 1970, p 223.
- ¹⁴ TsAMO, folio 9607, inv. 15393, file 6, sheet 28; folio 475, inv. 8891, file 7, sheet 37.
- ¹⁵ "Sovetskiye Voenno-Vozdushnyye...", p 180.
- ¹⁶ TsAMO, folio 318, inv. 16772, file 2, sheet 36.
- ¹⁷ "Inzhenernye voyska v boyakh za Sovetskuyu Rodinu" [Engineer Troops in the Battles for the Soviet Motherland], Voenizdat, 1970, pp 280-281.
- ¹⁸ "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945" [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941-1945], Vol 2, Voenizdat, 1961, p 432.

¹⁹ G. Ye. Peredel'skiy, A. I. Tokmakov, G. T. Khoroshilov, "Artilleriya v boyu i operatsii" [Artillery in a Battle and an Operation], Voenizdat, 1980, pp 122-123; "Razvitiye taktiki Sukhoputnykh...", p 237.

²⁰ Ibid. [sic.], p 125.

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DEVELOPMENT OF TROOP AIR DEFENSE DURING FINAL STAGES OF WAR EXAMINED

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[Article by Col Gen Art Yu. Chesnokov, commander of troop air defenses and first deputy commander-in-chief of the Air Defense Troops: "From the Experience of Organizing Air Defense for the Ground Forces in Offensive Operations During the Second and Third Periods of the War"]

[Text] The fundamental changes in the means of air attack and the means of combating them as well as the forms and methods of combat operations of the ground forces have posed a number of complex problems in organizing air defense. In solving these problems of lasting theoretical and practical significance is the enormous combat experience in organizing air defense for the troops and installations as acquired during the offensive operations of the fronts during the years of the Great Patriotic War. At present, this experience has maintained its pertinence and should be considered in the further development of troop air defense.

In June 1942, by an order of the USSR NKO [People's Commissar of Defense], responsibility for all the antiaircraft artillery of the fronts (called the troop antiaircraft artillery) was entrusted to the artillery commander of the Soviet Army and on the staff of whom an air defense section was organized and later changed to the air defense directorate. In the all-arms field forces, correspondingly responsibility rested with the artillery commanders of the fronts and armies and they exercised this through their air defense deputies. In the formations the artillery commanders were responsible for the organization of air defense. The frontal [tactical] fighter aviation where significant forces were involved for troop air defense was part of the air armies.

In the summer of 1942, army air defense regiments began to be formed¹ and from October 1942, antiaircraft artillery divisions of the RVGK [Supreme High Command Reserve]² as a means of Headquarters to be used to reinforce the cover of the ground forces formations and field forces and for massing antiaircraft artillery in the main sectors of their actions. The troop reconnaissance and warning system was strengthened by setting up army and front VNOS [air observation and warning] companies.

By the start of the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad Fronts already possessed 5 antiaircraft divisions, 20 army air

defense regiments, 15 SZA [medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery] and MZA [small-caliber antiaircraft artillery] battalions, not counting the regular MZA subunits in the formations. According to the air defense plans of the fronts, 87.5 percent of these resources (including the 5 antiaircraft divisions of the RVGK) were to be put under the armies. The antiaircraft artillery in cooperation with the fighter aviation covered most securely the assault troop groupings of the Southwestern and Don Fronts making the main thrust from the north (the 5th Tank Army and the 21st and 65th Armies).

In the armies, from the TOE and attached antiaircraft artillery, antiaircraft artillery groups (ZAG) were organized consisting of an antiaircraft division, 4 or 5 army MZA regiments and 1 or 2 SZA battalions of the RVGK. In the armies where army mobile groups were to be committed to the breakthrough, the ZAG were divided into subgroups: one of them (an antiaircraft division and SZA battalion) covered the first echelon divisions in the sector of the main thrust and the other (2-5 army air defense MZA regiments and 1 SZA battalion) the second echelon of the army.

In the jump-off position for an offensive, the battle formation of the antiaircraft artillery in the sector of the army's main thrust was organized in two or three lines of MZA batteries and two lines of SZA batteries. The antiaircraft divisions were used compactly: the width of the front of the battle formation did not exceed 10-12 km and the depth 6-7 km. The density of the antiaircraft artillery in the breakthrough sector (5th Tank Army) reached 3.6 medium-caliber weapons and 11 small-caliber ones per kilometer of front.³

On the offensive, the antiaircraft artillery regiments and battalions moved battery by battery behind the advancing troops in the aim of ensuring their continuous cover against air strikes. However, they often fell behind the troops due to the lack of motor transport and the virtually complete absence of tracked tractor units.

Thus, in the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, the advisability was confirmed of establishing army ZAG as a new form for using the antiaircraft artillery. The backbone of the group was, as a rule, the antiaircraft division which had its own headquarters bodies and equipment. Since initially this division did not have medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery, the group was reinforced by one or two separate SZA battalions from the RVGK.

In the course of the counteroffensive, it became necessary to organize the integrated use of the antiaircraft machine guns, the small- and medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery in cooperation with the fighter aviation of the air army. This increased effectiveness and ensured the covering of all altitudes and the stability of troop air defense. The antiaircraft artillery was basically maneuvered on the tactical scale. This usually came down to moving the battle formations of the antiaircraft units as the covered troops advanced. The experience of the combat employment of the antiaircraft artillery units and formations at Stalingrad became the basis of their employment in the subsequent operations and was an important stage in the development of troop air defense tactics.

At Stalingrad, for the first time in the course of the war, the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery forces set up an air blockade around a large encircled troop grouping. The enemy, regardless of concentrating large air forces, was deprived of the possibility of continuously air supplying its surrounded troops. This experience was widely employed in the Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy, Budapest, Berlin and other offensive operations of the Soviet Army.

By July 1943, the number of RVGK antiaircraft divisions on the fronts had risen to 32. The number of army and corps MZA regiments had also increased. Regardless of this, there was a shortage of antiaircraft artillery. For this reason, the Soviet Command, in planning offensive operations, constantly provided for the reinforcing of the troop air defense with RVGK units and formations in the aim of the securest defense against air strikes against the troops fighting in the most important sectors.

Already in the Kursk Battle, the air defense plans of the fronts made provision for the maneuvering of the antiaircraft units and formations. In preparing an operation, simultaneously with the regrouping of the forces and even somewhat beforehand, the antiaircraft artillery was regrouped for covering the troop concentration, the railheads and crossings.

The tank armies were reinforced with one (the 2d and 3d Guards Tank Armies) or two (the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies) antiaircraft divisions. The reinforcing of the tank armies with antiaircraft artillery was carried out both ahead of time in the jump-off position (the Central and Voronezh Fronts) as well as at the moment of committing them to the breakthrough (the Western and Bryansk Fronts), and subsequently they were forced to abandon the latter variation.

The army ZAG in the operations of the Kursk Battle were not established in the all-arms armies, since the antiaircraft division had medium- and small-caliber regiments and could independently cover one rifle corps fighting, as a rule, in the sector of the army's main thrust. The basic efforts of this division were concentrated on covering the battle formations of the first echelon all-arms formations of the corps and the artillery firing positions.

The battle formation of the antiaircraft division in the jump-off position, in contrast to the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, was deployed in one or two echelons and that of the antiaircraft regiments in two or three lines of batteries. In the division's first echelon were located, as a rule, two MZA regiments. A SZA regiment was usually located next to them and reinforced the cover for the main grouping of the corps against enemy air strikes from medium and high altitudes. In the second echelon there was usually a third MZA regiment. Such a battle formation of the antiaircraft division was the most effective as close cooperation of the antiaircraft artillery was achieved with the covered troops, and fire coordination was ensured between the antiaircraft regiments (batteries). This increased the effectiveness of the antiaircraft fire. Moreover, continuity of control over the fire and maneuvering of the antiaircraft regiments was ensured during the offensive battle from the division's commander and staff. In subsequent operations, such employment of antiaircraft divisions became widespread.

The experience of the Central Front (70th and 13th Armies) showed that when three or four antiaircraft divisions were concentrated in a breakthrough sector of 15-20 km, it was advisable to position one of them in the second echelon for covering the army artillery both in the jump-off position and during its move in the offensive.

The quantitative and qualitative growth of the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery as well as the improved forms and methods of their combat employment made it possible in the operations of the second and third periods of the war to counter the massed enemy air raids with the massed employment of the air defense resources of the fronts.

Significant fighter aviation forces were assigned from the air armies for organizing troop air defense. Thus, in the spring of 1943, in the Kuban during the period of the offensive by the Northern Caucasus Front, four out of the seven fighter divisions of the 4th Air Army were assigned to cover its assault groupings. In the summer of 1943, at Kursk, the 16th Air Army of the Central Front assigned three out of the six fighter divisions for this purpose and the 2d Air Army of the Voronezh Front assigned four out of the six divisions.⁴

In order to exclude the scattering of effort of the troop air defenses covering the troops of the fronts and to protect the lines of communications and the installations of the front rear against air strikes, upon instructions from Headquarters units and formations of the National Air Defense Troops were assigned.

The commander of the front was the organizer of cooperation between the front's air defense forces and the formations of the National Air Defense Troops fighting in his area. Upon his instructions, the staff of the air army, the air defense section of the front and the staffs of the cooperating formations of the National Air Defense Troops worked out cooperation plans, signal charts and other combat documents. Here the allocating of combat zones was the underlying principle of cooperation.

The operational configuration of the front's air defense resources was new. It became two-echelon. In the first echelon were the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery of the front and in the second the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery of the front formations of the National Air Defense Troops.

Due to the lack of radar to reconnoiter the air enemy in the antiaircraft artillery formations and units it was not always possible to organize centralized fire control and this reduced the effectiveness of repelling the enemy air raids.

During the second period of the war in controlling troop air defense, extensive use was made of assigning an operations group (OG) from the air defense section of the front to help the deputy artillery commander for air defense of the army fighting in the main sector. This group provided supervision over the combat readiness of the air defense units and formations and the supply of ammunition and fuel and provided aid to their staffs in organizing the maneuvering and control of the formations. As practice showed, the assigning of such operations groups made it possible to direct the combat activities of the antiaircraft aviation units and formations more flexibly and provided clear cooperation between them and the covered troops and fighter aviation in the main sectors.

After the winning of strategic air supremacy, the air armies began to assign somewhat fewer forces for covering the troops. Thus, in the Vitebsk-Orsha Operation, the 1st Air Army of the Third Belorussian Front assigned three out of the eight fighter divisions for this purpose and in the Lvov-Sandomierz Operation, the 2d Air Army assigned five out of the ten fighter divisions.

In 1944, the number of 37-mm cannons in an antiaircraft division increased from 48 to 72. All the MZA batteries became six-gun. The fire capabilities of the division were increased for combating the German fighters (ME-109, ME-110 and FW-190). In 1944-1945, from 47 to 58 antiaircraft divisions of the RVGK were fighting on the fronts. Moreover, MZA regiments and battalions had been assigned to all-arms armies, the tank, mechanized and cavalry corps.

Wider use began to be made of the operational maneuver along the front, when the antiaircraft artillery formations were shifted from one sector to another (the Vistula-Oder Operation), from depth, when they were removed from covering rear installations for protecting the troops against air strikes (Budapest, Berlin and Prague Operations). A new feature was the maneuvering of large antiaircraft artillery forces of the RVGK as well as the formations (units) of the National Air Defense Troops (for example, the moving up in 1944 of air defense resources from Tallim, Riga and Warsaw into the area of Budapest and in 1945, for protecting the crossings over the Vistula and the Oder against air strikes). This made it possible for the fronts to concentrate the basic efforts of the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery in the main sectors of troop combat and this contributed to the successful carrying out of the operations.

Troop air defense was planned to the entire depth for periods and stages of an operation: the concentrating of the troops, the taking up of the jump-off position, the breakthrough of enemy defenses, the committing of the mobile groups of the front (army) to the breakthrough and their actions in the operational depth. For each period (stage) they determined: the objects to be covered, the employed fighter and antiaircraft formations (units) and their missions, the procedure for organizing reconnaissance and warning, cooperation and control, readiness times, persons responsible for the air defense of the troops (installation) and the maneuvering of the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery in preparing for and in the course of the operation.

During the period of preparing for an operation, the basic air defense objects were: railroad junctions (stations) through which the concentration of the troops and the stockpiling of materiel were to be carried out, troops on the march and in the assembly areas.

The basic air defense objects during the period of the moving up and deployment of the troops into battle formations were their main groupings in the jump-off position for the offensive and the mobile groups in the assembly areas and the basic resources of the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery were concentrated to cover these. A portion of the forces covered the most important rear installations of the front (army). The antiaircraft units and formations, as a rule, moved up to the jump-off position at night.

The massing of antiaircraft fire was achieved by concentrating the antiaircraft divisions on the main sectors of the fronts (armies). For example, in the Belorussian Operation in the sectors of breaking through the enemy defenses in the armies fighting on the main sectors of the fronts, in addition to their TOE MZA regiments there were concentrated: two antiaircraft divisions each in the 1st Guards and 49th Armies of the Second and Third Belorussian Fronts; three antiaircraft divisions in each of the 60th and 38th Armies of the First Ukrainian Front in the Lvov-Sandomierz Operation; two antiaircraft divisions in each 37th and 46th Armies of the Third Ukrainian Front in the Iasi-Kishinev Operation.⁵ Army antiaircraft artillery groups were created from the RVGK antiaircraft battalions and these also included the TOE MZA regiments of the armies and corps. In addition, the troops of the main attack grouping of the front in breaking through the defenses and in further operations were covered by the forces of one or two fighter divisions from the air armies of the fronts.

In the aim of increasing the effectiveness of air defense, the 1944 Instructions approved by the Air Forces commander and the artillery commander of the Soviet Army outlined the procedure for organizing coordinated actions of the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery. For each operation the staff of the air army together with the air defense section of the front and the staffs of the front formations of the National Air Defense Troops worked out a cooperation plan which usually allocated the tasks between the antiaircraft artillery and the fighter aviation by time, areas (zones, sectors), targets and altitudes; the procedure was determined for the actions of the cooperating men and weapons, for organizing communications and information between them, and mutual recognition; corridors for the flight of our aviation were set; methods of target designation and other questions were coordinated. Uniform cooperation and recognition signals were set for the troops and for the army.

In the antiaircraft fire zone, the fighters were given the right to attack any target having first given the appropriate signal. But this right was no longer unlimited as it had been before. The staff of the air army through the air defense section of the front notified all the command posts of the ground air defense weapons of the time, combat areas, number of aircraft and the altitude of their flight. The air defense section informed the air army staff of the grouping and areas covered by the antiaircraft artillery, the boundaries of the antiaircraft fire zones and the changing of these.

In the Berlin Operation, one of the most important tasks for the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery of the fronts was to cover the troops on the march in moving up to the front line and in regrouping as well as the crossings over the Oder, Neisse and Bober Rivers. Up to 80-83 percent of all the antiaircraft divisions was employed to cover the troops of the first echelon armies. Thus, the troops of the 5th Attack Army (considering the antiaircraft artillery of the 2d Guards Tank Army) were covered by two antiaircraft divisions and three MZA regiments. The density of antiaircraft artillery per kilometer of front in the breakthrough sector (7 km) was 24,3 guns per kilometer of front and during the committing of the 4th Guards Tank Army to the breakthrough in the zone of the 5th Guards Army of the First Ukrainian Front, 27 guns.

At the end of the operation an important mission for the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery of the fronts was to organize and establish an air blockade of the surrounded enemy grouping. By joint and active operations, they thwarted all the enemy's attempts to aid their troops by air. A significant portion of the antiaircraft artillery participated in the street battles in Berlin and acquired experience in fighting with airplanes, tanks and infantry in a large city.

Thus, the experience of the last war has clearly shown that for achieving success in an operation it is essential to have sufficiently strong air defense for the troops capable of reliably protecting them against enemy air strikes.

The quantitative and qualitative growth of troop antiaircraft artillery as well as the acquiring of combat experience naturally led to a change in the organizational structure of troop air defense. This was expressed in the forming of a large number of initially army air defense regiments and then antiaircraft artillery divisions of the RVGK, the number of which by the war's end had increased by several-fold in comparison with November 1942. As a result of these measures, the antiaircraft artillery formations and units involved in air defense of the fronts and armies in terms of their combat strength, the nature of the tasks carried out, the role and place in the operations were actually turned from a type of artillery (which they remained until the war's end) into an independent branch of troops.

Antiaircraft artillery groups of front (army) subordination were organized to ensure a reliable and continuous cover for the assault groupings. Primary importance was paid to the operational maneuvering of the antiaircraft artillery formations and units by shifting them from one sector to another both within the front and between fronts. At the same time it must be pointed out that the lack of tracked antiaircraft units led frequently to the falling behind of the antiaircraft artillery in relation to the covered troops.

The increased role and more complex tasks of the troop air defense required a reorganizing of the control and command system in the aim of increasing its effectiveness, reliability and degree of centralization. For solving the given problem, the introduction of the positions of deputy artillery chiefs of the fronts and armies for air defense and the creation of air defense sections (departments) in these elements were of great importance.

The successful carrying out of the air defense tasks for ground troops in the operations conducted by them during the second and third periods of the war became possible due to the close coordination of operations of all the air defense resources (primarily the fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery) following a single concept and plan. An important role was played by assigning the units and formations of the National Air Defense Troops to cover the lines of communications and important installations of the fronts. This made it possible for the basic forces of troop air defense to be employed for protecting the troops against air attack. Their joint efforts were coordinated in terms of sectors, areas (zones, regions) of combat operations, time, targets and altitudes in repelling massed air raids.

The complexity of controlling fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery under the conditions of limited time required that the fronts ahead of time set up a reconnaissance system for the air enemy which would function constantly and ensure not only the detection of the enemy in the zone of the entire front but also warn the covered troops of this in order to promptly ready the air defense forces.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ On 1 July 1942, only one army air defense regiment had been organized but in November of the same year, there were 107 of them in the operational army.
- ² Below the antiaircraft divisions have been named thusly for the sake of brevity. Each of them consisted of four MZA regiments armed with 37-mm cannons. At the beginning of 1943, a division included three MZA regiments and one SZA regiment armed with 76-(85-)mm guns.
- ³ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 36, inv. 12552, file 84, sheet 268.
- ⁴ Ibid., folio 302, inv. 20671, file 23, sheet 69.
- ⁵ Ibid., folio 36, inv. 12552, file 102, sheet 183; file 139, sheet 257; file 140, sheets 259-260; file 177, sheet 3.

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SECURITY OPERATIONS AGAINST RAIL, ROAD SABOTAGE DESCRIBED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 31-36

[Article by Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent, Col Yu. Pilyugin: "Security of Land Lines of Communications in the Course of the War"]

[Text] From the very first days of the war, the Soviet Command was forced to conduct an intense struggle against enemy sabotage and intelligence activities.

The situation developing at the outset of the war required the establishing of firm order in the rear of the operational troops and the organizing of dependable security for the troop and operational rear. For this purpose, troop directorates for the security of the front rear were organized in the Northern, Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and Southern Fronts. Subsequently, with the formation of new fronts, troop directorates for the security of their rear were also established. The commanders of the formations (units) of the Border Troops and the NKVD [People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs] Troops were assigned the chiefs of front rear security and they were subordinate to the chief of the Main Directorate for the NKVD Internal Troops as well as the military councils of the fronts.

The composition of the troops for securing the rear of each front was determined by the General Staff of the Soviet Army and the USSR NKVD considering the task to be carried out and the composition of the front's troops, the sociopolitical situation and the enemy's capabilities to initiate subversion and intelligence activities in the zone of the front. As an average for securing the front's rear, from four to nine regiments of the Border and Internal Troops were assigned. Thus, the Southern Front in June 1941 had in the troops securing the rear nine regiments of the Border and Internal Troops of the NKVD, one border detachment and one separate battalion. The chief of rear security for the Western Front in the autumn of 1941 had six regiments of the Border and Internal Troops of the NKVD. In conducting the Iasi-Kishinev Operation, the Second Ukrainian Front had as rear security troops four regiments of Border Troops, three regiments and one separate battalion of Internal Troops while the rear security troops of the Third Ukrainian Front had four Border Troop regiments. The rear security troops of the Third Belorussian Front in the Insterburg-Konigsberg Operation had seven regiments of Border Troops and three regiments of Internal Troops. The chiefs of rear security of the fronts also had security units for railroad installations, police units and subunits, convoy and other units and subunits.

The security troops were employed primarily to counter enemy subversive and intelligence activities in the rear area of the front as well as for protecting the most important facilities of the operational rear, primarily facilities on the lines of communications. Direct security for the rear formations, units and facilities was provided, as a rule, by their TOE resources.

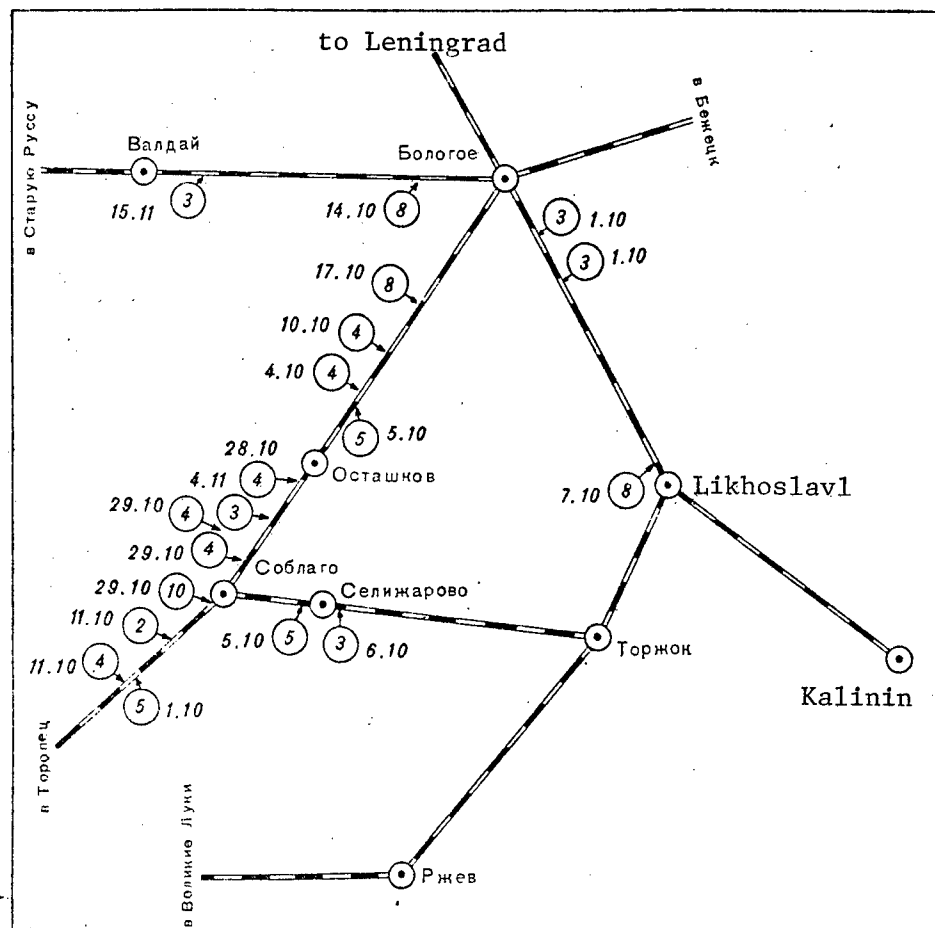


Diagram of actions of rear security subunits
on rail lines of Northwestern Front
in October-November 1942
(arrow shows place of sabotage, the figures give
the size of groups and date)

Under the conditions of active operations by enemy sabotage groups and detachments, the front rear security chiefs had to assign significant men and equipment to seek out and destroy saboteurs and to secure the most important installations on the railroads and highways. For example, in the autumn of 1942 the 24th Division of the NKVD Troops assigned 535 men to guard just 26 railroad stations and bridges of the Kalinin Railroad in the sector of the Northwestern Front.¹ The well-organized measures to combat saboteurs and the ground security for the stations and facilities on the railroads and highways did not permit the enemy to carry out any major acts of sabotage. Just from 1 October

through 22 November 1942, more than 200 German saboteurs and scouts were eliminated in the front's rear.²

The enemy sabotage formations were also very active on the lines of communications of the other fronts, particularly when the Soviet troops reached the territory liberated from the enemy in the western oblasts of the Ukraine and Belorussia, the Baltic and Poland. In these areas, along with the Nazi sabotage groups, numerous local bandit formations were active such as the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists), UPA (the Ukrainian Rebel Army) and others. The forces of these nationalistic organizations carried out a number of major acts of sabotage just on the railroads within the First Ukrainian Front in August-October 1944.

The experience of the war showed that sabotage groups, enemy airborne parties and various bandit formations, in attacking the ground lines of communications, raided primarily railroad junctions and stations and destroyed facilities on railroads and roads. For this reason, security for the designated installations was organized first of all and most dependably and significant men and weapons were assigned to carry out this task. Thus, security for the installations on the Leningrad, Kirov and October railroads in 1941-1942 was entrusted to the 23d NKVD Division. Seven armored trains were used for this same purpose.³ In June 1944, the 73d Regiment from the 27th Division of NKVD Troops was employed to secure the Belorussian Railroad and the 117th Regiment from the 32d NKVD Division for the Kovel Railroad.⁴

Significant resources were allocated in the course of the war to protect facilities on military roads. For example, in the course of the preparations for the East Prussian Operation, in March 1945, teams (from the security troops and the traffic control units of the front) numbering 20-30 and more men armed with carbines, submachine guns and machine guns were assigned to secure the bridges and other facilities on the military road No 35 of the Third Belorussian Front.⁵

For protecting large bridges, tunnels, dams and other important structures on railroads and highways as well as on the approaches to them along the entire perimeter of the defended territory, sentries (patrols) were set out. In guarding small bridges, sentries, as a rule, were placed only at the immediate approaches to the bridge. At railroad junctions and stations, they protected primarily their most important elements ensuring continuous traffic, control, water and electric supply. The experience of the war showed that it was also essential to protect the coal storage dumps at the railroad junctions and stations.⁶

When there were resources, in guarding particularly important installations, in addition to sentries (patrols) on the approaches to the installation they set out sentry posts (individual field guards) armed with light and medium machine guns. For repelling possible enemy attacks around the installations fire trenches were built and in the sectors of a most probable attack, pillboxes or other fire points. If the defended object was located in a forest, the forest and brush were cleared or felled for better viewing and firing on the approaches to it. Wire obstacles on high or low stakes were put up directly around the installation in several rows. They were set so that they would

not impede viewing and firing on the terrain lying ahead. Antipersonnel mines were set out between the rows of wire obstacles. Sometimes electrified wire obstacles were employed to strengthen the security for the most important installations on the railroads and highways. The experience of the Great Patriotic War showed their great effectiveness. Thus, over the entire period that the security troops of the Karelian Front (August 1942-July 1943) employed electrified obstacles, there was not a single instance of the infiltration of enemy sabotage groups in those sectors where they had been set out. Even with repeated damage to the power cable and mesh of the obstacles by artillery fire, the enemy preferred not to cross them, but rather go around.⁷

For blowing up bridges and crossings on major rivers, during the war years the Nazi Command employed special underwater demolition subunits and used floating mines. The so-called "frogman" subunits carried out a number of acts of sabotage in the rear of the Soviet troops. For example, on 24 April 1945, in the rear of the Second Belorussian Front demolition divers blew up the crossing over the Oder in the area of Niepperwiese. Here they used a delayed-action mine setting it under one of the pontoons.⁸

The security troops took the appropriate measures to prevent similar sabotage. On the approaches to a bridge (crossing) they set up wire mesh obstacles which were suspended to a supporting cable anchored on the shores. On wide water obstacles the barriers were set out with intermediate floating supports for which they used pontoons from the TPP [heavy bridge train] equipment which were anchored and equipped with winches for tightening the cable. The mesh obstacles on the approaches to bridges and crossings were reinforced with anchored beach mines. Along with the net obstacles for protecting bridges and crossings against floating enemy mines, extensive use was also made of boom barriers which consisted of a supporting cable and beams fastened to it. When the floating mine struck a beam it exploded, a portion of the beams was torn off the cable but the cable itself, as a rule, withstood several successive mine explosions. The destroyed areas of a boom barrier were easily rebuilt.

Experience showed that the organizing of direct security for railroad junctions and stations, bridges and other installations on railroads and highways still did not guarantee unobstructed traffic over them. For example, regardless of the well-organized security for the road installations and a number of sections of the above-mentioned Military Road-35 of the Third Belorussian Front, the enemy succeeded repeatedly in carrying out sabotage on it, mining individual sections and organizing ambushes.⁹ Analogous subversion also occurred in the rear of the Second Ukrainian Front in carrying out the Iasi-Kishinev Operation, in the rear of the First Ukrainian Front in conducting the Berlin Operation,¹⁰ as well as on the roads and railroads of other fronts. For this reason, along with organizing security for the most important installations on the lines of communications, it was essential to provide patrolling on areas of roads running through covered terrain or exposed to systematic actions by enemy sabotage groups. Patrolling was also organized when particularly important freight was being transported by road or railroad. This task was carried out by the rear security troops, the traffic control units and specially assigned subunits from combat units in the second echelon (the general troop reserve).

For patrolling on surfaced and dirt roads, foot patrols, motorcycles and armored vehicles were sent out and armored trains and armored handcars on the

railroads. In advancing on the threatened areas of roads and in conducting reconnaissance of the terrain adjacent to the road, the patrols discovered mined areas and enemy ambushes. In the event of necessity the size of the patrol could be increased by the subunits protecting the structures and installations on the lines of communications. In close cooperation they repelled enemy attacks on the roads.

However, experience showed that where railroad transports and motor vehicle columns carrying materiel were not securely guarded en route, the enemy succeeded in carrying out acts of sabotage. The number of sabotages increased particularly sharply on railroads and vehicular roads in the concluding stage of the war, when the Soviet troops entered the territory of Nazi Germany. There, along with the sabotage and bandit formations, there were numerous groups of soldiers and officers remaining from the defeated Nazi formations and units. Because of this the commands of the fronts and armies decided to strengthen direct security for the transports and columns carrying materiel traveling on railroads and motor roads. The men and weapons of the combat units and subunits began to be widely involved in carrying out the designated mission along with the security troops. Thus, in the course of the Berlin Operation on the First Ukrainian Front, the motor vehicle columns traveling the Breslau--Berlin Autobahn were escorted by tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts which traveled not only at the head and in the tail but in the middle of the columns every 15-20 vehicles. Artillery subunits also escorted the motor vehicle columns with freight in the rear of the front.

Rail transports with important freight during the war years were guarded by special armed teams the size of which depended upon the number of cars in the consist and the importance of the freight. For example, in the First Baltic Front, such teams included one officer, one or two sergeants and from two to ten armed soldiers. Approximately the same teams were assigned to escort rail transports on the other fronts.¹²

On a majority of the fronts at the regulating stations special composite security battalions were organized for making up the designated teams. For example, on the First Baltic Front a composite battalion received 10 officers, 20 sergeants and 100 enlisted men from each army as well as 10 officers, 10 sergeants and 50 enlisted men from the front's service subunits. On the Third Belorussian Front such a battalion numbered 30 officers, 40 sergeants and 200 enlisted men armed with submachine guns and rifles.¹³

Thus, the experience of the Great Patriotic War showed that the normal operation of rail and motor transport in transporting troops, continuously delivering materiel and evacuation is possible only with dependable security for the installations on the lines of communications, with the patrolling of the sections of the railroads and motor roads and with direct security for the transports and columns carrying materiel.

The system of land security for the rear envisaged a combination of direct security of the installations with an active struggle against enemy saboteurs and scouts. For this purpose during the war years the security troops conducted searches for and the elimination of enemy sabotage and intelligence subunits

in the rear and served as a manned obstacle on certain lines in order to prevent the infiltration of saboteurs to major rear installations. The experience of organizing security for the land lines of communications during the war years has not lost its importance today.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 221, inv. 1399, file 142, sheet 71.
- ² TsGASA [Central State Archives of the Soviet Army], folio 32880, inv. 5, file 27, sheet 216.
- ³ "Vnutrenniye voyska v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg. Dokumenty i materialy" [The Internal Troops in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Documents and Materials], Moscow, Yuridicheskaya literatura, 1975, p 7.
- ⁴ "Sovetskiye pogranichnyye voyska" [The Soviet Border Troops], Voenizdat, 1976, p 40.
- ⁵ TsAMO, folio 241, inv. 238381, file 26, sheet 48.
- ⁶ At the outset of the war, the coal stacks were not guarded. The enemy benefited from this. For example, on the railroads of the First Belorussian Front, saboteurs in September-October 1944 began inserting special bar mines camouflaged as coal in the storage coal stacks. Inside the rods were an explosive and primer. Being fed into the furnace of a steam locomotive along with the coal, such a bar mine was activated by the increased temperature and put the locomotive out of commission (TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 15039, file 15, sheet 522).
- ⁷ "Informatsionnyy sbornik inzhenernykh voysk" [Information Bulletin of the Engineer Troops], 1947, No 5/18, pp 71-79.
- ⁸ TsAMO, folio 237, inv. 71450, sheet 157.
- ⁹ Ibid., folio 241, inv. 238381, file 26, sheet 48.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., folio 234, inv. 2618, file 21, sheet 161; folio 236, inv. 52051, file 683, sheets 64, 111, 113, 115.
- ¹¹ Ibid., folio 236, inv. 52051, file 683, sheets 71, 72.
- ¹² Ibid., folio 235, inv. 2102, file 61, sheet 29.
- ¹³ Ibid., sheet 50; folio 241, inv. 238381, file 26, sheet 88.

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UKRAINIAN PARTISAN AID TO SOVIET TROOPS IN DNEPR CROSSING TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 37-41

[Article by Col A. Domank: "Cooperation of the Ukrainian Partisans with the Soviet Troops in the Battle for the Dnepr"]

[Text] After the Kursk Battle, the Soviet High Command was planning a series of operations to liberate the left-bank Ukraine and the Donets Basin. Great attention was given to capturing the crossings over the Dnepr and to creating favorable conditions for its crossing.

As the Soviet Army drew closer to the Dnepr, the attacks by Ukrainian partisans against the enemy intensified. Thus, while in July 1943, they had blown up 359 enemy troop trains and destroyed 710 vehicles with personnel and loads, in August and September the numbers reached 1,184 trains and 1,820 motor vehicles.¹

At the height of the general offensive by Soviet troops, the Military Council of the Voronezh Front examined and on 15 September 1943 approved a plan for the participation of the partisans in capturing the crossings over the Desna, Dnepr and Pripyat and providing aid to the troops in the liberation of Kiev. This plan had been worked out by the operations group of the Ukrainian Staff of the Partisan Movement [USHPD] (chief, Maj Gen T. A. Strokach) in accord with the instructions of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party (Bolshevik). One of the sections of the plan provided for increased sabotage on the enemy lines of communications. For carrying out these tasks, 20 partisan formations and detachments numbering more than 17,000 men were to be used.²

Permanent radio contact was established with all the detachments which were to be involved in the operation. The large partisan formations, in addition, maintained radio contact with the subordinate detachments. Representatives from the front staff or the USHPD were sent to the formations of A. N. Saburov, M. I. Naumov, I. A. Khitrchenko, F. I. Korotkov and I. M. Bovkun. The organizing of reconnaissance on the crossings, their capturing and defense were to be carried out independently by the formation leaders, proceeding from the situation. The time of starting operations by the formations in each specific instance was to be determined by the front military council in such a manner that the formation commander had 4-5 days for reaching the designated crossing and capturing it. Three U-2 aircraft were assigned for back-up communications

with the partisan detachments and these were under the operations group of the UShPD of the Voronezh Front.

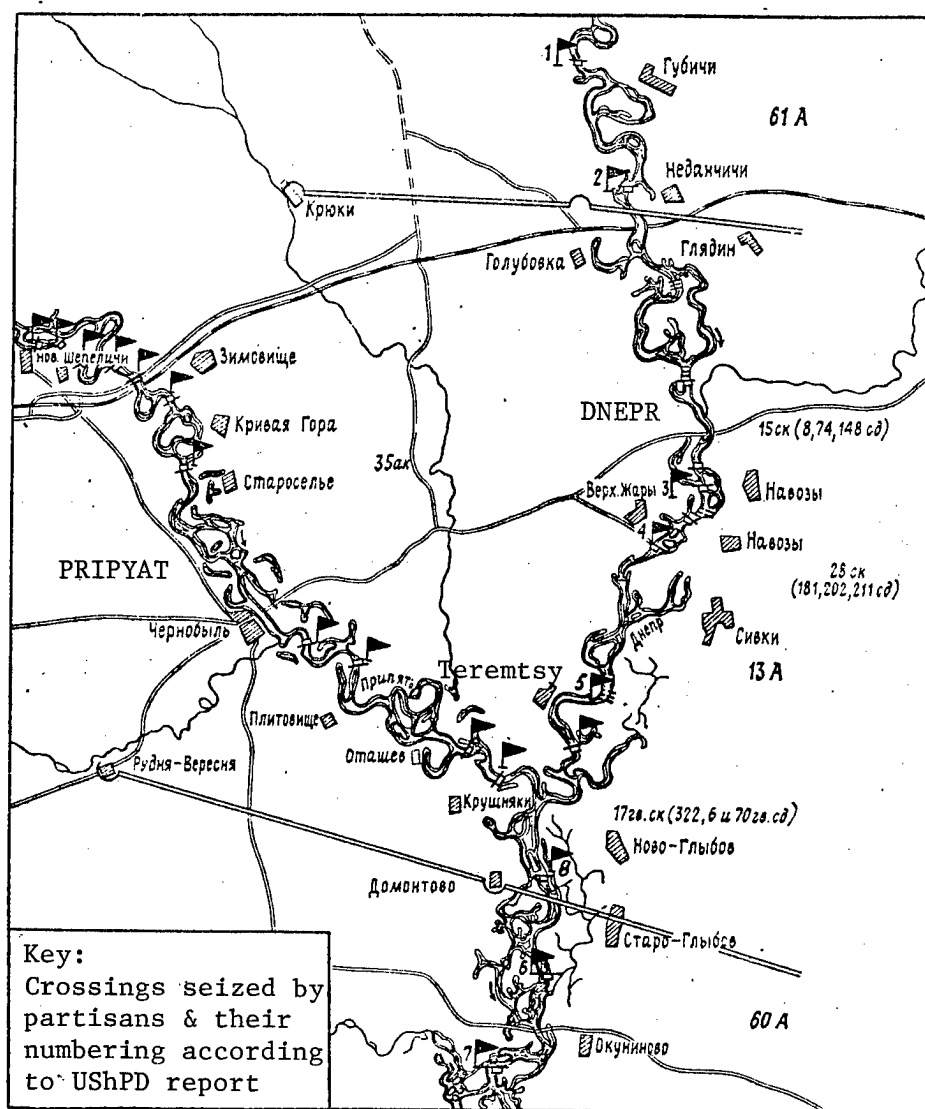
However, the situation had changed sharply by the time the forward units of Soviet troops had reached the Dnepr. While previously the enemy had comparatively small forces on the right bank, during the retreat the concentration of its troops had significantly grown there. The partisan detachments had to reach the Dnepr under extremely difficult conditions. Many of them were unable to make their way to the river, but nevertheless they provided great support for the formations which participated in the battles for the crossing, having drawn off significant enemy forces.

According to the UShPD data, during the offensive of the Soviet troops to the north and south of Kiev the partisans had prepared and turned over to the formations of the 61st, 13th and 60th Armies some 25 crossings including 3 over the Desna, 12 over the Dnepr and 10 over the Pripyat.³ Distinguishing themselves in the battles for the crossings were the formations imeni Kotsyubinskiy (commander M. N. Taranushenko), imeni Shchors (commander Yu. O. Zbanatskiy), "For the Motherland" (commander I. M. Bovkun) and imeni Chapayev (commander I. K. Primak).

Close cooperation with the partisans was achieved in the crossing of the Desna, Dnepr and Pripyat by the advancing Soviet Army troops. Thus, on 18 September the forward detachment of the 70th Guards Rifle Division reached the Desna in the region of Morovsk. Upon the order of the UShPD, detachments from the formations "For the Motherland" and imeni Kotsyubinskiy had also moved up here. By the joint efforts of the troops and the partisans, the enemy crossing was captured. In the evening the division crossed the river.⁴

The interfluvium of the Desna and Dnepr was actually a partisan zone. Because of this the organization of cooperation with the partisans was significantly simplified. Frequently the commanders of divisions and regiments met with the commanders of the partisan formations and detachments and agreed on the procedure for joint actions. For example, on 20 September the commander of the 70th Guards Rifle Division, Maj Gen I. A. Gusev, met with the commander of the partisan formation "For the Motherland" I. M. Bovkun. It was decided that the division, without waiting for the rear services which had fallen behind, without a halt would cross the Dnepr and then the Pripyat. Here its units would use the crossing captured by the partisans at the village of Teremtsy (see the diagram). The partisans also crossed the river with the division's subunits.⁵

On the same day the 203d and 205th Guards Rifle Regiments from the division reached the Dnepr at the villages of Novo-Glybov and Staro-Glybov. Partisan scouts led these units to the area planned for the crossing. During the night of 21 September, the second battalion (commander, Maj A. A. Berbeshkin) from the 203d Guards Rifle Regiment began the crossing on boats and improvised rafts along with the partisans.⁶ Simultaneously to the south of the mouth of the Pripyat, the third battalion of Guards Capt V. M. Kosorukov crossed the Dnepr. It was also accompanied by partisans. They knew the area well and helped the commanders of the rifle companies covertly take up the jump-off position for the attack and pointed out the location of enemy firing points previously spotted by them. A partisan subunit traveled with each company.



Crossings equipped by partisans on the Dnepr and Pripyak Rivers to the north of Kiev and turned over to the advancing Soviet Army troops in September 1943

The USHPD, with the approval of the command of the Central Front, in the zone of advance of the XV Rifle Corps of the 13th Army prepared a major operation to capture crossings on the Pripyat in the region of the village of Novyye Shepeliichi and the Yanov Railroad Station. A Kiev partisan formation under the command of I. A. Khitrichenko, the formations of V. S. Ushakov and G. F. Pokrovskiy as well as the partisan detachment imeni Chapayev under the command of F. V. Golovach participated in it.

The operation commenced 4 days before the planned reaching of the river by the corps' units, 22 September, and on the 23d the partisan formations already had the rayon center of Novyye Shepeliichi in a semi-circle. The formation of I. A. Khitrichenko, having driven off the enemy battle outposts on 25 September,

attacked Yanov and Novyye Shepelichi. Simultaneously, detachments from other formations attacked from the west and the north. The enemy hurriedly retreated, having left 180 killed soldiers and officers on the battlefield. With the aid of the local population, the partisans quickly built a bridge over the Pripyat, they restored the ferry and collected and prepared boats for the crossing.⁷ On 26 September the river was reached by units of the 8th Rifle Division (commander, Col P. M. Gudzh') and they crossed the Pripyat without a halt.

By 25 September, the Dnepr had been reached by units of the LI Rifle Corps from the 38th Army of the Voronezh Front. Upon orders from the UShPD, the partisan subunits from the formation "For the Motherland" participated along with them in building the crossings, they supplied the division commanders with information on enemy defenses and supported troop combat operations on the right bank of the Dnepr.⁸

In carrying out the instructions of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and the order of the UShPD, the partisans significantly intensified their actions in the areas of the Bukra bend of the Dnepr, Kanev, Cherkassy and Kremenchug. For example, to the south of Kiev, where the main grouping of the Voronezh Front was advancing, partisans from the formation imeni Chapayev sunk an enemy steamship and two motor launches on the Dnepr, destroying 147 Nazis during this. In a battle with the Nazi garrison in the region of Khotyskiy on the left bank of the Dnepr, the Chapayev partisans destroyed more than 100 enemy soldiers and officers, they seized much captured equipment and then prevented the retreating Nazi units from crossing the Dnepr.⁹

Active in this area was a partisan group headed by A. V. Tkanko which had been dropped into the forests adjacent to Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi by the operations group of the UShPD under the Military Council of the Southwestern Front.¹⁰

On 22 September, to the south of Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi in the Bukra bend, the Dnepr was reached by the forward units from the 3d Guards Tank Army. Here they were already expected by partisans from the formation imeni Chapayev and the group of A. V. Tkanko (120 persons). They provided aid in bringing over to the right bank of the Dnepr the submachine gun company of Lt N. I. Sinashkin from the 51st Guards Tank Brigade. The guardsmen and the people's avengers drove the enemy out of Grigorovka and supported the battalion's crossing. Having captured a small bridgehead, the battalion of Sr Lt A. A. Pishulin, along with the partisans, supported the crossing of the Dnepr by other subunits from the 51st Guards Tank Brigade. During the day the partisans brought 520 soldiers and officers across the river on their own crossing equipment.¹¹ And when fierce enemy counterattacks began on the following day, the guardsmen and the cooperating partisans successfully repelled them.

The Military Council of the Voronezh Front on 10 October 1943, issued a special order which commended the contribution of the partisans in the crossing of the Desna, Dnepr and the Pripyat and expressed gratitude.¹²

Together with the XXXIII Rifle Corps of the 5th Guards Army of the Steppe Front, the partisan detachment imeni Shchors participated in the crossing of the Dnepr

at Kremenchug. The partisans provided aid in the crossing of the Dnepr to other formations of the front and delivered valuable intelligence information.

The partisans cooperated actively with the troops of the Southwestern Front in the course of the Zaporozhye Offensive Operation (10-14 October 1943). According to data from the scouts of the partisan detachment under the command of O. Yatsenko, Soviet aviation attacked the enemy crossings and destroyed several pontoon crossings, while the detachment "Groza" (commander N. Filatov), upon a mission from the command of the 5th Assault Army blew up a bridge over the Dnepr which had been erected by the Nazis in the area of Zaporozhye. Detachments under the command of N. Karpenko and B. Mikhal'chuk and the partisan groups "Zaporozhets" and "Ded" (commanders P. Chernyy and A. Sazonenko) took a direct part in eliminating the Zaporozhye enemy bridgehead.

In the course of the Dnepr Airborne Operation which was conducted in the aim of assisting the troops of the Voronezh Front in crossing the Dnepr, the partisans cooperated closely with the airborne troop subunits. Under the conditions of heavy enemy antiaircraft fire, the paratroopers jumped from great heights, as a consequence of which the airborne subunits were scattered over significant areas in Kanevskiy, Mironovskiy, Tarashchanskiy and Cherkasskiy rayons. Many landed in the enemy positions.

The USHPD, with the agreement of the command of the Voronezh Front, ordered all its subordinate partisan detachments and underground organizations active in these areas and in neighboring localities to help the airborne troops. The partisan detachment under the command of G. K. Ivashchenko operating in the Cherkassy forests helped assemble and reunite into one subunit some 400 parachutists, while the detachment under the command of D. F. Goryuchiy brought over 100 soldiers to its headquarters. With the aid of the partisan detachment from Kanevskiy Rayon, the commander of the 5th Guards Airborne Brigade, Lt Col P. M. Sidorchuk, assembled around 1,000 airborne troops in the Toganchanskiy Forest and organized them into a single brigade.¹³

In cooperation with the Kanev partisan detachment under the command of K. K. Solodzhenko, the detachment imeni Pozharskiy (commander D. F. Goryachev) and the detachment of T. F. Prokin,¹⁴ the airborne troops conducted active reconnaissance and sabotage operations. During the night of 13 November, by an attack from the rear the brigade together with the partisans captured the enemy strongpoints of Lozovok, Sekirna, Svidovok and assisted the crossing of the Dnepr by units of the 52d Army.

Thus, the partisan detachments and formations of the Ukraine took an active part in all stages of the battle for the Dnepr. In the course of the Soviet Army advance to the Dnepr, the partisans increased the attacks against the railroads and enemy garrisons and caused the occupiers great losses. They also provided substantial aid to the advancing troops in capturing and holding the crossings over the Desna, Dnepr and Pripyat.

In the crossing of these rivers, the partisans showed high military skill and mass heroism. Many of them were decorated with governmental awards while the commanders of the partisan formations and detachments Yu. O. Zbanatskiy, I. M. Bovkun, A. V. Tkanko, N. D. Simonenko, A. I. Shevyrev and the partisan scout R. A. Kleyn were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The experience of the cooperation of the Soviet troops with the partisan formations gained during the period of the battle for the Dnepr was successfully employed subsequently in the offensive operations to liberate the right-bank Ukraine and Belorussia.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Party Archives of the Party History Institute under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine (below PA IIP TsK KPU), folio 62, inv. 1, file 2, sheet 84.
- ² G. M. Utkin, "Shturm Vostochnogo vala" [The Storming of the Eastern Wall], Voenizdat, 1967, p 78.
- ³ "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Vol IV, Voenizdat, 1959, pp 577-578.
- ⁴ "V plameni srazheniy" [In the Flames of Battle], Voenizdat, 1973, p 139.
- ⁵ PA IIP TsK KPU, folio 92, inv. 1, file 1, sheet 114.
- ⁶ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 462, inv. 65840, file 18, sheet 43.
- ⁷ "Ukrainskaya SSR v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945" [The Ukraine in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945], Vol 2, Kiev, Politizdat, 1975, p 327.
- ⁸ TsAMO, folio 9614, inv. 297776, file 1, sheet 39.
- ⁹ PA IIP TsK KPU, folio 98, inv. 1, file 1, sheet 102.
- ¹⁰ A. N. Asmolov, "Front v tylu vermakhta" [The Front in the Wehrmacht's Rear], Moscow, Politizdat, 1977, p 158.
- ¹¹ "Ukrainskaya SSR v Velikoy...", Vol 2, p 331.
- ¹² G. M. Utkin, op. cit., p 81.
- ¹³ PA IIP TsK KPU, folio 1, inv. 9, file 26, sheets 77-80; VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1960, pp 28-31.
- ¹⁴ Commander of one of the organizational groups of the UShPD sent to the other side of the Dnepr in August 1943.

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OPERATIONS OF BILLETING SERVICES IN LENINGRAD BLOCKADE DESCRIBED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 42-46

[Article by Engr-Col (Ret) V. Ladesov: "On the Operation of the Billeting Bodies Under the Conditions of the Leningrad Blockade"]

[Text] Soon after the Soviet-Finnish War, the leadership of the billeting operations service for the first time in the history of the Soviet Army was entrusted to the rear bodies. The Main Intendant Directorate (Order of the NKO [People's Commissar of Defense] of 26 July 1940) began to be concerned with the questions of billeting services. Prior to this the Main Billeting, Main Military Engineer, the Military Construction, Construction-Billeting and Billeting Operations directorates of the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] had successively been in charge of this.¹

At the outset of the Great Patriotic War, the indendant directorate of the Leningrad Military District was changed to the indendant directorate of the Leningrad Front while the billeting operations section (KEO) of the district became the KEO of the front. It was headed by the Mil Engr 1st Rank A. F. Zherupanov. The personnel of the front's KEO already had some experience in billeting troops during the period of the war with the White Finns in 1939-1940.

In line with the forced retreat of our troops under the pressure of superior enemy forces, the billeting operations units (KECh) of the garrisons were forced to halt their activities and retreat along with the units and formations. The officer personnel of the eliminated KECh from the garrisons became available to the front's KEO.

Under the conditions of the war and the blockade of Leningrad, the functions of the KEO of the intendant directorate of the Leningrad Front changed fundamentally. The engineer and technical personnel of voyenproyekt [military design institute] directed the work of adapting quarters as hospitals and rebuilding destroyed military buildings and utilities. A fuel group headed by the assistant chief of the fuel section, Lt Col Intend Serv Ya. G. Mel'nikov, in addition to the planning and distributing of fuel, supervised the organizing of its procurement by the troops and directed the work of two work companies organized specially for preparing firewood for the KECh of the rayons.

The operations and supply group headed by the deputy chief of the operations section, Maj Intend Serv M. P. Lyubimov, with the halting of the delivery of materials to Leningrad, switched completely to self-procurement and the organizing of new shops to produce billeting articles.

The functions of the KECh of the rayons were significantly altered and broadened in the area of direct operation of the military compounds and the buildings assigned by the Leningrad gorispolkom with the partial shifting of the troop units and the necessity of protecting and servicing the utility installations by the operational workers put directly under the KECh of the rayons. For eliminating damage caused as a result of bombing and artillery shelling by the enemy, emergency teams were organized.

For quartering the troops, the KECh of the front followed the Directive of the Chief Intendant Officer of the Red Army of 13 August 1941² on sheltering the troops for the winter and putting in order the existing barracks facilities and the facilities received from civilian organizations. The housing was re-equipped, bunk beds were built, and camp facilities were heated and adapted for the winter. According to the plans for dugouts worked out by the Main Intendant Directorate and the standard lists of construction projects for quartering the headquarters of a rifle division and its special units and rifle, howitzer and cannon artillery regiments, construction was started on dugout camps. Three versions of the dugout camps were planned: for the quartering of the troops in the field, in camps and at winter quarters.

For quartering the new formations arriving from the Baltic, from Hanko Peninsula, from Luga as well as troop units passing through and the newly formed hospitals and convalescent battalions, the chief of the KECh of the Leningrad garrison, Maj V. V. Stenyayev and the chief of the KECh of Pravoberezhnyy Rayon, Engr-Maj N. I. Tulyakov used the barracks and housing facilities freed by the troop units leaving for the operational army and the 4 military academies and 16 military schools evacuated even before the start of the Leningrad blockade into the rear of the nation.³

In order to quarter the large amount of troop units and rear facilities concentrated in Leningrad and its suburbs, in barracks, riding schools and other facilities of the military camps, two- and three-decker bunks were built, outside washrooms and privies were provided and the messes were enlarged. This made it possible to exceed the quartering standard for servicemen in peacetime by 4-5-fold.⁴

The direct leadership over the work of the KECh of the rayons in billeting the troop units and rear facilities was headed by the deputy chief of the front's KEO for quartering and planning, Mil Engr 1st Rank G. P. Yefremov. The KECh workers also surveyed the city housing. Buildings assigned by a decision of the gorispolkom for use by the front were turned over to the KECh of the Leningrad garrison and the KECh of Pravoberezhnyy Rayon. The necessary repair and construction work was carried out in houses assigned for the quartering of servicemen, bunks were built and beds installed in the hospitals.

In 1941-1942, 305 city buildings were adapted for the quartering of 197,000 men, and the schools as hospitals with a total of 150,000 beds. Dugouts for

27,000 persons were built in the Leningrad suburbs for the personnel of the front's reserve units.⁵

The work of preparing the city buildings for the quartering of the troop units and for hospitals was carried out under difficult conditions as there were not enough workers, the available ones had poor skills and many were exhausted. Due to the fact that there was destruction as a result of the frequent air raids and artillery shellings at the projects, work had to be done several times.

In addition to the basic work of adapting the buildings for quartering the troop units and hospitals, camouflage work was also carried out, the wooden attics were given fireproof treatment, bomb shelters were adapted and equipped, rooms were made airtight, windows were repeatedly glazed and repairs carried out on parts and elements of buildings which had been damaged by enemy fire.

All the chiefs of the KECh of the rayons and the KECh of the Leningrad garrison as well as the chiefs of the billeting operations sections of the armies took measures to find the necessary furniture for the hospitals being organized. Beds, bedside tables, chairs, desks, and arm chairs were obtained for temporary use from the civilian organizations they were taken from the vacated apartments in the housing of the leadership the families of which had been evacuated and were also made on the spot.

For the hospitals located in Leningrad, the KEO of the Leningrad Front organized that the transport carrying ammunition to the forward defensive edge deliver back some 20,000 iron beds and 10,000 articles of other furniture from the garrisons which were in the zone of combat operations and had been subjected to intense enemy air raids and artillery shelling.

Under the conditions of the blockade, supplying the troop units and hospitals with fuel was one of the most important tasks for the rear. The measures carried out by the billeting operations bodies in the prewar period to prepare firewood using the troop units and forestry officers, to monitor the economic consumption of fuel, to use wastes for current needs and to intensify the delivery of firewood and coal to the garrisons by rail and water transport made it possible to create significant fuel stocks by the start of the war.

With the start of the blockade, the front's KEO began to ascertain the available fuel resources in the troop quartering areas and to redistribute these. All types of local fuel were used including peat, shale, sawdust, stumps, branches, waste cording as well as waste coal at the railroad and plant coal yards. All these measures could not fully satisfy the demand of the troop units and hospitals. For their full supply of fuel, the troop units themselves began to prepare firewood under the supervision of the KEO of the armies and the forces of the KECh of Toksovskiy and Osinoroshchenskiy rayons. In accord with the decree of the Military Council of Leningrad Front on 27 November 1941 each of these rayons had been assigned a newly organized separate work company with 345 men in each.

Under the chief of the KECh of Toksovskiy Rayon, in addition to the 11th Separate Work Company, there were also the 16th, 25th, 99th and 205th Separate

Service Companies of the army base.⁶ The work companies involved in preparing firewood were manned by servicemen unfit for line service and by women.

Initially firewood from the felling areas was delivered by motor transport. In September-November 1942, the work companies and the repair-machine shops of the front's KEO built a narrow-gauge railroad from Peri Station to Salo-Kyulya. This railroad was 28 km long⁷ and operated during the entire war. A larger portion of the track used for building the narrow-gauge railroad had been removed from sections in the immediate proximity of the front line.

Upon instructions of the command of the Leningrad Front, the KEO was made responsible for organizing the washing of underwear and uniforms at six mechanized garrison laundries. This work was directed by the chief of the KECh of the Leningrad Garrison, Maj V. V. Stenyayev and his assistant Capt Intend Serv I. N. Anan'yev. The laundry personnel, regardless of the difficult conditions, particularly for food, each year fulfilled the production quotas by 110-116 percent. In 1941, they washed 2,050 tons of underwear and uniforms and in 1942, 2,280 tons.

A particularly difficult task for the KEO was the operation of the barracks and housing from December 1941 through April 1942 when the operation of the Leningrad city facilities was completely disrupted and the supply of electric power and water stopped. Regardless of all the measures undertaken by the front's billeting operations bodies the system of central heating, water supply and sewage began to break down. Their freezing and breaking down also occurred due to the low outside air temperature (at times reaching minus 30°-40° C) and the destruction of walls and windows of buildings with the enemy air bombing and artillery shelling.

With the calling up of the male contingent into the ranks of the Soviet Army and the evacuation of the population from the city, the available operating personnel of the military camps and KECh of the rayons declined significantly. Thus, at the end of 1941, of the 1,720 workers stipulated in the TOE for the front's billeting operations bodies there were only 1,050 persons.⁸

The chief of the front KEO and the chiefs of the KECh of the rayons took measures to staff the military camps with operational personnel using women who were trained directly on the spot. The engineer and technical personnel of the front KEO and the KECh of the rayons were completely shifted to providing help in operating the military camps and hospitals. The engineers and technicians frequently took over for central heating mechanics and electricians.

The basic task in operating the troop buildings and the facilities received from the gorispolkom for hospitals was to create normal living conditions for wounded soldiers and commanders: maintaining the necessary temperature and lighting in the wards, continuous supply of water, and the maintaining of the sewage system in proper working order. The personnel of the front KEO and the KECh of the rayons supplied the hospitals with all sorts of billeting services. In 44 hospitals there were emergency water supply units with spare tanks, pumping stations and pressure tanks. At 10 installations they drilled emergency shallow wells. Some 2,510 stoves were installed to back up the central heating.⁹ In 14 hospitals occupying rather large quarters, water heating was

replaced by steam. Lighting and heating of the buildings was now almost independent of the city electric power supply.

In order to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the power units (central heating, x-rays, physical therapy and so forth) and the lighting networks during the time the city electric power was shut off, 123 thermal, gas generator and steam engines were installed. For lighting of operating rooms, food units, medical checkpoints and public areas during emergencies some 3,400 storage batteries were installed in the hospitals and temporary power lines were run to 23 hospital installations from the Leninergo [Leningrad Power Administration] feeders which had not been shut off.

Upon petition from the KEO chief, the front military council adopted a decision to organize two repair-reconstruction companies with 100 men in each.¹⁰ These were made available to the KECh chief of the Leningrad Garrison and the KECh chief of Pravoberezhnyy Rayon.

During the summer of 1942, the repair-reconstruction companies, the personnel of the KECh of the rayons, the troop units and hospitals as well as the repair-machine shops of the front KEO completely rebuilt the frozen central heating system of 49 buildings used as hospitals. Some 6 facilities which had been shut off from the city TETs began to be served by local boilers, 16 areas were built or adapted as boiler rooms, including 3 boiler rooms for the medical checkpoints.

Upon instructions of the front's chief of rear services, the servicing of the medical checkpoints and the bath and shower facilities was also provided by the front KEO and the KECh of the rayons.

During the difficult days of the blockade, the rear and billeting operations workers did a great deal to promptly quarter the troops and supply them with all types of billeting services. For outstanding, unstinting work in 1941-1942, the following decorations were given: the Order of the Red Star to the KEO chief of the Leningrad Front, Mil Engr 1st Rank A. F. Zherupanov, and to the chief of the KECh of the Leningrad Garrison Maj V. V. Stenyayev, while the medal "For Combat Achievement" was given to the deputy chief of the front KEO for operations, Maj Intend Serv M. P. Lyubimov.¹¹ Many officers, Red Army men and employees of the billeting operations bodies received valuable gifts and money prizes.

FOOTNOTES

¹ In the Russian Army, the Main Engineer Directorate was in charge of troop quartering, and from 1912, the Main Directorate for Troop Billeting Services.

² TsAMO [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 79, inv. 12395, file 119, sheets 45, 46.

³ Ibid., file 300, sheet 9.

⁴ Ibid., sheet 3.

- ⁵ Ibid., sheet 4.
- ⁶ Ibid., folio KECh Toskovskogo rayona, inv. 525549, file 6, sheets 26, 37.
- ⁷ Ibid., folio 79, inv. 12395, file 300, sheet 8.
- ⁸ Ibid., sheet 11.
- ⁹ Ibid., sheet 6.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., sheet 6.
- ¹¹ Ibid., sheet 11.

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ACTIONS OF ADVANCE PARTY IN DNEPR CROSSING RETRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 47-52

[Article by Lt Col (Ret) Ye. Belomestnov*: "Heroes of the Crossing of the Dnepr"]

[Text] The broken chain of trenches of the first battalion from the 955th Rifle Regiment ran across a sandy ridge separated from the channel of the Dnepr by a grassy meadow. It was growing dark. The commander of the first company, Sr Lt Ivan Severin, was looking across the river at the right bank through the binoculars. Beyond the dully shimmering strip of river the white huts of the village of Monastyrek ran down the hill. Beyond them were barren steep-sided hills cut by the yellow ravines.

Two days previously, the 309th Rifle Division as part of the 40th Army had fought its way to the Dnepr. During the night of 23-24 September 1943, it was to cross the river. The basic crossing was planned further downstream at the villages of Balyka and Shchuchinka (to the south of Rzhishchev). Preparing for it were two battalions from the 957th Rifle Company. At Monastyrek the Severin company was to capture a bridgehead on the right bank.

For the entire day the senior lieutenants observed this village but did not detect any signs of life there. It had literally died. And Nazis were nowhere in sight. But Severin knew that they could not have left the village but had merely dropped out of sight. During the previous night, the regimental scouts--Sgt Nikolay Kashin and Pvts Mikhail Chebodayev and Fedor Turov--had made their way there. They had crossed the Dnepr on a small boat without any problem. They crawled their way to the far hut. They knocked lightly on the window. The frightened housewife stated that Monastyrek "was full of Germans but no tanks." With this information the scouts came back. And now at 0200 hours the company had been ordered to cross to the opposite shore and dig in below the village in an area overgrown with brush. The commander was thinking: a difficult mission has been set for me. The company had few men as they had

* During the described period, Yevgeniy Timofeyevich Belomestnov was a literary co-worker on the newspaper VO SLAVU RODINY of the 309th Rifle Division.

been lost fighting to the Dnepr. Not a single platoon commander remained. In truth the battalion commander Capt D. P. Potylitsyn had promised to give new men. For this reason he had gone off to see the regimental commander at Gusenitsy.

The battalion commander returned when it was already dark and summoned Severin.

"Well," he began. "You have been given 10 scouts, the same number of sub-machine gunners and 2 signalmen. From the 5th Company you will receive Timchenko's squad and you will take a medium machine gun crew from our machine gun company.

"Dmitriy Pavlovich [Potylitsyn], what about the crew of Aleksandr Opalchko?" asked the senior lieutenant.

"I am not against it," agreed the captain. "He is a dependable fellow. For yours take the strongest and most battle tested. You are going on a serious job and for this reason you must take the best of the submachine gunners and riflemen. Top men! There is nothing to say about the scouts as they are all the best. Their commander Sft Kashin is the best.

"Who are the signalmen?"

"From the regimental signal company. Sgt Zadorozhny and Pvt Shikunov.

"I know Shikunov from previous battles," said Severin happily. "An outstanding fighter! I remember the Sula River with a damaged bridge across it. We were caught on the other side. The Germans were firing from Lokhvitsy and we could not raise our heads. Communications had been disrupted. Shikunov crawled along the bridge looking for the break. Shells were exploding all around and fragments of boards were flying into the water. But on he crawled. He found the break and spliced the ends!"

"Yes, a fighting fellow, a Siberian from Bogotol. He has won the medal 'For Valor' and the Order of the Red Star."

...The battalion commander Potylitsyn was 35 years old. He had been a miner from Chernogorsk which is near Abakan. He had begun the war in July 1941 as a sergeant and was now a captain, in command of a battalion with two orders on his chest: the Red Banner and the Red Star. Ivan Severin was 21 and had arrived in the division coming out of the hospital. Potylitsyn valued him for his scrupulousness, for precise fulfilling of orders and for a great ability to control subordinates in combat. This is why the choice fell precisely on Severin when they decided the question of which of the company commanders would be the first to head the crossing of the river....

In concluding the talk, Capt Potylitsyn for the first time called the senior lieutenant by his name and patronymic:

"Well, Ivan Kirillovich [Severin], go to the company and receive the new men. Talk with them and give the mission. Boats are being brought to the crossing area. I'll come down later.... Yes, I almost forgot. In any eventuality put

the signalmen in different boats. Each of them has a field telephone and a supply of reels with wire."

The officers were very calm and business-like. That was the way: before a difficult, risky battle they tried to show no excitement. Now was precisely such a moment. Both the battalion commander and the company commander understood all the difficulty of the forthcoming combat mission. Would they succeed in crossing and digging in on the right bank? Had not a trap been set there? However, neither one put his fears in words. An order was an order. It was not to be discussed but rather carried out.

The first to reach Severin was the squad from the 5th Company of the 2d Battalion. "Pvt Timchenko," the soldier reported in a deep voice. "The squad is at your disposal."

In front of the company commander stood a not particularly even file of men. In the darkness it was hard to make out the faces, but Severin realized that these were basically middle-aged men. "Where is the commander?" he asked Timchenko.

"I am the commander."

In passing with Severin along the line, Timchenko introduced his subordinates in a not completely proper fashion:

"Levchenko, Grigoriy Ivanovich...Ovcharov, Stepan Polikarpovich...fellows from Sumi, my fellow countrymen from Krasnopol'skiy Rayon. Grigori and Stepan are from Vasilyevka and I am from Grebennikov. We are neighbors."

"Amazing!" smiled Severin. "I am also from Sumi."

"Are you really from our area?" Timchenko threw up his arms. "You are not from Krasnopol'skiy?"

"No, I am from the village of Khmelevo which is near Romny."

Timchenko continued to introduce the soldiers of the squad:

"And this is Mikola Mamayev. He could be my son. He is from the Urals. A Mari by nationality."

"I see these are fighting men," said Severin.

"That is accurate, they have been under fire," confirmed Timchenko. "They have hit the Fritzes and will in the future!"

Soon the scouts arrived in the company followed by the sub-machine gunners and the two signalmen. Aleksandr Oplachko with his team reported from the first machine gun company. Severin spoke with all of them and explained the mission, the procedure for the crossing and the actions on the right bank. Then he stated:

"If anyone doubts the success or feels indifferent, he can remain. Does anyone?"

Silence. Waiting a minute, Ivan Severin repeated the question:

"Who wants to remain?"

"No use, comrade commander," replied Sgt Fayzulla Agletdinov for all of them. "Don't take offense. We will all go with you."

The carts arrived with the boats. Capt Potylitsyn arrived with them. They made their way to the river across the meadow, strictly observing silence: in front was the composite company and behind it the carts.

Before loading in the boats, the battalion commander embraced Severin:

"I hope, Ivan Kirillovich.... The main thing is to hold on. Dig in and make a lot of noise. You have enough ammunition. We will support you with artillery. On the following night, the entire battalion will come over."

"I will try," assured Severin.

In daylight Capt Potylitsyn had explained the plan of combat to the senior lieutenants: the company was to distract the enemy in order to support the basic crossing down the Dnepr at Shchuchinka. This was the decision of the division commander. Both were aware of how hard it would be to hold out until the next evening when the battalion would start its crossing. But this had to be done no matter what the cost. Severin told the battalion commander:

"I will send the boats back...so there is no enticement."

The boats pulled away from the shore one by one. The scouts of Sgt Nikolay Kashin were in the lead boat and the others followed behind. The right bank approached slowly like dark wall. There were 40 or 50 m to the landing area....

"It looks like we made it," thought Severin. At that very moment, an illuminating rocket exploded over Monastyrsk. A machine gun chattered from somewhere above. The bullets pierced the side of the boat where Nikolay Shikunov was unwinding a thread of telephone wire. Two men were wounded.

"Get down lower!" commanded the senior lieutenant quietly.

The second burst caught the scouts. Three were wounded but the shore was already close. The next rocket had not yet gone off when the boats were already touching the bottom of the river. The company began landing.

"Forward! Forward!" urged the commander at full voice.

They ran through the brush for about 150 m.

"Hit the dirt! Dig in!" Severin himself fell into a gully and quickly began to level it out and deepen it.

Shikunov set up the telephone near the commander.

"Establish contact," he ordered.

The telephone operator turned the handle.

"Pine, Pine, this is Cedar. We have landed. Here he is. I will give...you, comrade senior lieutenant."

Taking the receiver, Severin heard the distant voice of the battalion commander Potylitsyn:

"Report!"

"We are in place. A little further down. We are digging in. Five are wounded.... No, it is still quiet.... Everything is going according to plan. I have sent the boats with the wounded back. If need be, fire at the village."

The company hurriedly dug in. Shikunov was able to deepen his foxhole to shoulder depth. Severin left his shelter, having ordered the telephone operator to answer the questions of the battalion commander.

The landing party was positioned in an arc on the small bridgehead: in the center was the machine crew of Pvt Aleksandr Oplachko and not far from it was Sgt Grigoriy Zadorozhnyy with the field telephone. Having spoken a bit with them, the company commander went over to the left flank to the scouts. As soon as he had gotten in the foxhole of Sgt Kashin, firing commenced and the throaty cries of the Nazis could be heard. Through the noise came the alarmed voice of Zadorozhnyy:

"Comrade senior lieutenant, we are being surrounded!..."

Severin and the scouts rushed to help. The machine gun crew of Oplachko and the signalman had used grenades to drive off the Nazis. Help arrived on time. Firing on the move from sub-machine guns, the scouts forced the Nazis to retreat. Sgt Zadorozhnyy and Pvt Oplachko were about to rush after them, but the commander halted them:

"Come back! There is no need to rush!"

The senior lieutenant returned Kashin with the scouts to the left flank and himself dropped down into the emplacement of the machine gunners.

"Did you miss the Germans?"

"Yes," admitted Oplachko, "we were busy setting up the foxhole."

"Assign an observer. And don't fall asleep!"

"We won't now," replied Zadorozhnyy. "They have discovered us and won't leave us alone."

"We did not come here for quiet," replied Severin. "How are communications?"

"Fine. Do you want to talk to the other side?"

"It isn't necessary. I am going to see Timchenko. And you keep alive here."

"Greetings from me to my old fellow countrymen," said Grigoriy Zadorozhnyy.

"For whom?"

"Timchenko, Ovcharov and Levchenko."

"Are you also from the Krasnopolye area?"

"I am from Akhtyrka. We are all from the Sumi area."

"I have been lucky with compatriots today!" exclaimed Severin and, parting the brush with his hands, headed off to the right flank.

The defensive position was basically complete: the trenches had been fully dug and were connected by a common trench. Now it was time to make some noise. The company commander returned to his place. While he was absent, Pvt Nikolay Shikunov had made a good foxhole for him with a sloping breastwork.

"Did the battalion commander call?" asked the senior lieutenant.

"He phoned recently. He said you should contact him."

"Let's call."

Capt Potylitsyn replied immediately:

"What was going on with that firing?"

"A small clash. The Nazis attacked and we drove them off."

"How are things now?"

"Everything is ready."

"Then go into action."

"Roger, we are starting."

Having handed the receiver to Shikunov, Severin commanded loudly:

"Everyone open fire! For 3 minutes."

Shots rang out. The small bridgehead let the enemy know of its whereabouts at the full power of its albeit small strength. The Nazis responded immediately. Traces of fire stretched from Monastyrek, from the hills opposite and from the bluff to the right which hung over the Dnepr. The dotted lines converged on

the narrow section of the bank where Severin's company was. The bullets cut the brush and plowed into the breastworks of the trenches.

"The Fritzes have gotten angry," shouted Shikunov.

"Let them burn. Now we have them straddled," said the commander.

Our artillery and mortar troops on the left bank of the river struck the enemy firing positions which had given themselves away.

"Cease fire!" ordered the senior lieutenant. "Intensify observation."

The bridgehead fell silent. But the alarmed Germans did not calm down and continued intensive machine gun fire.

A dull autumn sun rose over the sandy slopes of the left bank. The day started, 24 September 1943, and possibly this would be the last one for those who during the night besieged this inhospitable piece of land which had already been permeated with the smell of powder.

I recall 4 days after the Severin company had crossed the Dnepr, I (the author of these lines) happened to be in Monastyrsk which had already been liberated by the 955th Rifle Regiment of Lt Col I. Ye. Davydov. In the battalion of Capt Potylitsyn which was besieging the hill near the village, I spoke with the soldiers and the commanders and obtained comments for our divisional newspaper VO SLAVU RODINY. Soon thereafter several of them were published.

Recently in working in the Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense, I had the good fortune to re-read these materials.

Here is what I. K. Severin wrote then:

"We called the piece of the right bank occupied by us of some 150 m in width 'Little Land' and vowed to perish but not to surrender it to the enemy before the arrival of reinforcements. We were aware that during the day there would be fierce engagements against the enemy and we prepared for them. In the morning the Nazis opened up heavy mortar and artillery fire against our tiny bridgehead. Messerschmitts flew over our heads and strafed us with machine guns. The attempt to bring in reinforcements for us did not succeed. The Nazis forced the boats to turn back by ground and air fire."¹

Subsequently, events developed as follows.

In the intervals between the artillery shelling, the company was stubbornly attacked by enemy infantry. Up to a platoon of Nazis pressed the area defended by Timchenko's squad. Stepan Ovcharov was the first to meet the enemy face to face. In jumping into the trench, the Nazi soldier raised his sub-machine gun.

¹ TsAMO [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 309 sd (1617), inv. 400054, file 1, sheet 186.

Ovcharov seized it by the muzzle and pulled it toward him. The Nazi hit his chest on Stepan's shoulder, released the weapon and stumbled. Ovcharov using the captured sub-machine gun hit the soldier on the head with all his strength. The helmet, with a noise, slipped onto his neck. Then Stepan got the Nazi with the second blow. Two Nazis jumped Timchenko together. Grigoriy Levchenko ran up with a rifle to help the commander and bayoneted one of them while Petr Timchenko himself finished off the second. Nikolay Mamayev, who was better installed in the trench, fired the sub-machine gun. The enemy extended line hit the dirt. One could see the Nazi officer, waving his pistol, trying to raise the soldiers by kicks. Mamayev cut him down with a short burst.

To the left there was hand-to-hand combat involving Pvt Petr Anisimov, Pfc Dmitriy Alfimov and Pvt Mikhail Miroshnik.

"Mikola!" Timchenko shouted at Mamayev. "You are over there firing the sub-machine gun and we are here!"

The three fellows from Sumi ran along the trench to help Anisimov and his comrades.

Fighting resumed with its former strength. The Nazis, having lost eight men, retreated.

Closer to the center, Fayzulla Agletdinov with his squad drove off the pressing Nazis. The "maxim" of Sasha Oplachko did not fall silent for a moment.

The scouts of Nikolay Kashin were fighting on the left flank. They not only drove off the enemy attacks but also organized brief sorties. Thus, during one of them Mikhail Chebodayev and Petr Pozdeyev threw grenades at a medium machine gun crew.

From the eastern bank the battalion commander Potylitsyn requested information on the situation every half hour. Having heard the report of the company commander, he ordered:

"Hold on, Severin! It is already afternoon.... When darkness falls we will be with you!"

"Fire, more fire!" requested the senior lieutenant.

Our guns and mortars constantly supported the company with fire. Without this, it would scarcely have held the bridgehead.

During one such telephone conversation, a German grenade exploded near the trench: a group of Nazis was approaching. Nikolay Shikunov fired a sub-machine gun at them. The enemy hit the dirt. Then the signalman threw two grenades and immediately heard explosions, cries and groans.

"Not so bad, I guess?" said Nikolay with satisfaction and then threw another "pineapple."

"Good going, you kept your head," said Severin, praising the telephone operator. "I can see you are not the shy type."

"Fear is not enough in a tight spot," replied Shikunov.

For the entire day the company held off the enemy attacks. Its ranks were thinned. Oplachko, Kashin and Kulikov were killed.... Timchenko, Ovcharov, Levchenko, Agletdinov, Chertov, Chebodayev, Seredenko and Miroshnik were wounded.... Bleeding, they continued to fight.

By evening you could count on your fingers the number of persons who had not been wounded. But the company held out.

Darkness was falling. Sparse stars began appearing in the darkening sky. And again the battalion commander phoned:

"Alright, Severin! Wait!"

The enemy shifted its fire across the river. In the light of the enemy rockets, the water sparkled in pink tones, it seethed from the explosions of shells and mortar rounds and bubbled with machine gun bursts. Through the fire came boats, rafts and ferries toward the right bank. Nothing could halt the begun crossing of the river.

The mixed company of Sr Lt Ivan Severin had held out! On 23 October 1943, by an Ukase of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to Sr Lt Ivan Kirillovich Severin, Sgt Fayzulla Khaziyeovich Agletdinov, Pfc Dmitriy Borisovich Alfimov, Pvts Petr Semenovitch Anisimov, Mikhail Petrovich Miroshnik, Mikhail Grigor'yevich Yerokhin, Dmitriy Ivanovich Bondarev, Aleksey Timofeyevich Kulikov, Grigoriy Ivanovich Levchenko, Nikolay Matveyevich Mamayev, Stepan Polikarpovich Ovcharov, Aleksandr Alekseyevich Oplachko, Petr Kirillovich Pozdeyev, Petry Sergeyevich Timchenko, Fedor Dement'yevich Turov, Mikhail Ivanovich Chebodayev, Nikolay Pavlovich Shikunov, Aleksandr Lavrent'yevich Seredenko and Anatoliy Ageyevich Chertov.

On 10 January 1944, the titles of Hero of the Soviet Union were awarded to two other men in the mixed company of I. Severin: Sgts Nikolay Ivanovich Kashin and Grigoriy Kirillovich Zadorozhnyy.

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DEFENSIVE TACTICS OF A RIFLE BATTALION EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 52-57

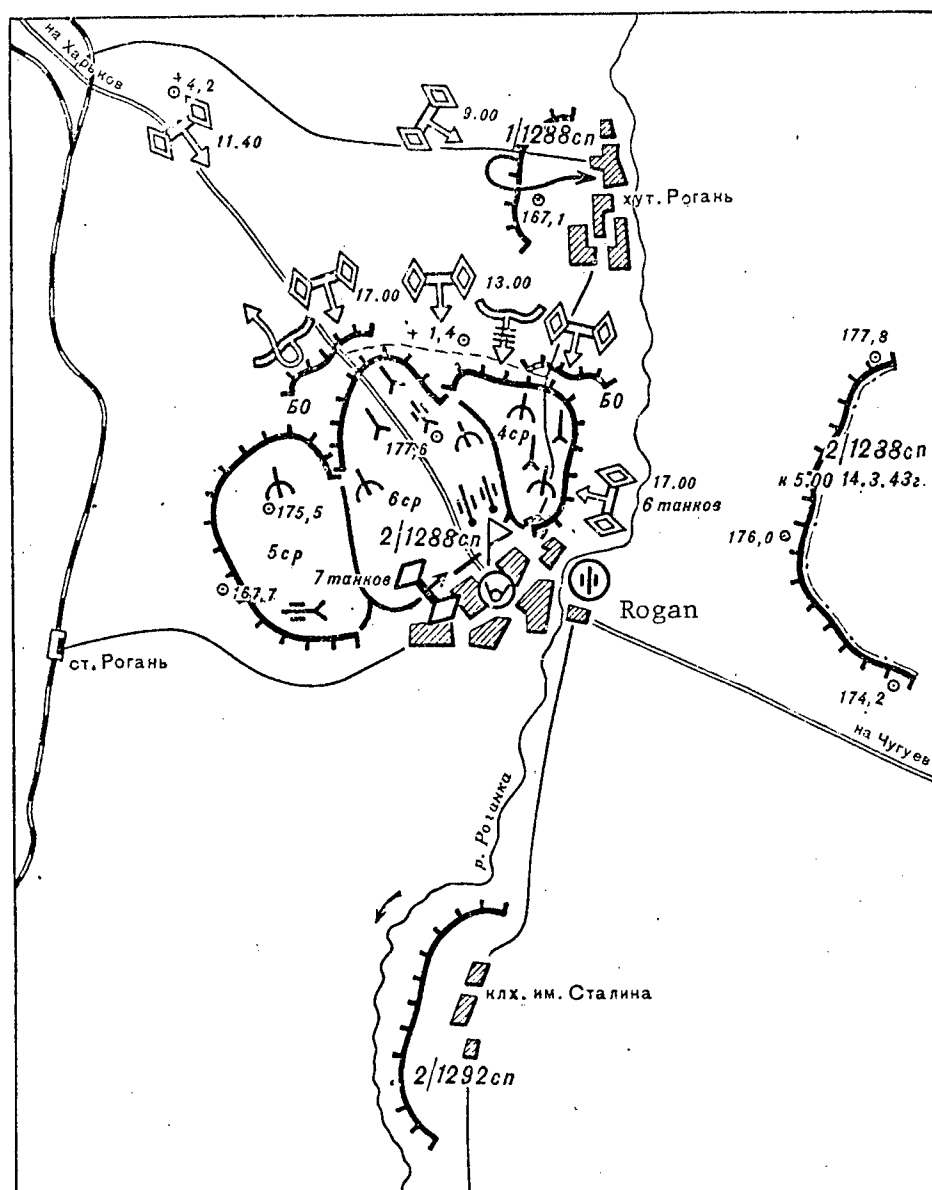
[Article by Maj A. Pavlov: "The Defensive Battle of a Rifle Battalion in the Area of Rogan on 12-13 March 1943"]

[Text] By the end of the day of 11 March 1943, formations from the Nazi SS Tank Corps had broken through the defenses of our troops to the north of Kharkov and, in developing the offensive to the southeast, tried to break out into the rear of the 3d Tank Army which was defending the city.

The 113th Rifle Division (commander, Maj Gen Ye. S. Alekhin), in being in the reserve of the 6th Army in the area of Alekseyevka (40 km to the south of Rogan) received the mission of advancing to the Roganka River, organizing defenses along this line and preventing the further advance of the enemy to the Severskiy Donets.

The 2d Rifle Battalion (commander, Capt I. F. Cherkashin) from the 1288th Rifle Regiment (commander, Lt Col I. I. Logvinov) from this division after a 40-km march in the spring mud by 0800 hours on 12 March took up the defensive area assigned to it: the northwestern edge of Rogan, the mound with the marker +1.4, elev. 175.5 and the southwestern edge of Rogan. The battalion was ordered to concentrate its basic efforts on holding Rogan in order to prevent the breakthrough of enemy tanks and infantry from Kharkov toward Chuguyev. On the right in the area of Rogan farm the defenses were held by the 1288th Rifle Regiment and on the left the 1292d Rifle Regiment. Due to the fact that the division was defending along a broad front, the battalion defensive areas were up to 5 km along the front. There were significant spaces not occupied by the troops between the battalion defensive areas. Thus, there was an interval up to 1.5 km between the 1288th Rifle Regiment and its adjacent unit on the right, and up to 2 km with the adjacent unit on the left.

The terrain which was to be defended by the 2d Rifle Battalion was an open plateau rising to the north and the west from Rogan. Even in moving the forward defensive edge significantly to the west of the Roganka River, the advantages in the nature of the terrain were on the side of the enemy. The population point itself located in the lowlands along both sides of the river, with clay structures easily destroyed by artillery fire was not of particular value for organizing the defenses in it.



Defensive battle of rifle battalion in area of Rogan 12-13 March 1943

For creating a solid defense along a broad front under these conditions significant men and equipment were required. However, the battalion had a total of 324 soldiers, 244 rifles, 36 sub-machine guns, 8 light and 6 medium machine guns, 4 antitank rifles, 2 45-mm guns and 8 mortars. One battery from the 1200th Light Artillery Regiment (4 76-mm cannons) and a battery of 2 203-mm guns had been assigned for supporting the combat operations of the battalion. The supply of ammunition was also insufficient (one unit of fire for rifle and machine cartridges, 0.3 units for mortar shells, 0.5 units of cartridges for the antitank guns and 0.5 units of shells for the 45-mm guns).¹

Proceeding from the terrain conditions and the existing situation, the battalion commander decided to focus his basic efforts on covering the Kharkov--Rogan highway along which the advance of the enemy tanks which had broken

through was expected. Because of the large spaces between the adjacent subunits, the battalion had to organize an all-round defense.

On 12 March 1943, at 1200 hours, having completed reconnaissance of the defensive area, the battalion commander issued the operation order.

The 4th Rifle Company, reinforced by two antitank guns and two medium machine guns, was ordered to defend the area: the boundary of the path with the road running from Rogan to Rogan Farm, elev. 177.6, the northern edge of Rogan. The crews of the antitank guns were take up firing positions on the right flank along both sides of the road to Rogan Farm, while the medium machine guns should be to the left of the road. They had the mission of firing over the river valley and the approaches to the farm. Battle outposts comprising 12 men occupied a position on the boundary of the road and the path.²

The 6th Rifle Company with one 45-mm gun, two antitank guns and two medium machine guns took up the defenses along both sides of the Kharkov--Rogan Highway. The 45-mm gun was ordered by the battalion commander to advance to elev. 177.6, while the antitank guns were positioned along both sides of the highway with the task of firing along it. In the aim of supporting the boundaries with adjacent companies, the crews of the medium machine guns took up firing positions on the flanks. Battle outposts were sent to the intersection of the highway and the village road (1.5 km to the northwest of elev. 177.6).³

The 5th Rifle Company reinforced by one 45-mm gun and one medium machine gun was given the mission of defending the area: the hill with the marker 175.5, elev. 167.7, the southwestern edge of Rogan. The gun crew was to take up a firing position along the road running to Rogan Station while the medium machine gun was to be on elev. 175.5.⁴ The mortar company with positions on the western edge of Rogan was given the mission of firing on Rogan Station, the Kharkov--Rogan Highway and the exits from Rogan Farm.

The battery of 76-mm guns positioned on the northwestern edge of Rogan was to fire at enemy tanks and infantry advancing along the highway from Kharkov and along the road from Rogan Station.

The battalion commander ordered the battery of 203-mm guns to prepare fire against the intersection of the highway and railroads and the exits from Rogan Station as well as be ready to repel enemy tank attacks from the northwest.

The battalion commander positioned his reserve (a mixed platoon of sub-machine gunners with a medium machine gun) on the northwestern edge of Rogan, having given them the mission to be ready for counterattacks on the axes of Rogan Farm and elev. 177.6.⁵

At 1400 hours, the companies had taken up their assigned defensive areas and had begun to dig trenches. Regardless of the frozen ground, by the beginning of combat a majority of the subunits had dug firing trenches for kneeling and standing positions and had equipped the firing positions for the guns, anti-tank guns and machine guns. Some trenches were interconnected by communicating trenches.

With the onset of darkness, the deputy battalion commander for political affairs assembled the party and Komsomol organizers and the company agitators, giving them the task of paying particular attention so that each soldier knew the particular features of the defensive area and knew the necessity of steadfastly repelling the enemy tank and infantry attacks. It was recommended in the talks to explain to the men that the basis of success was their tenacity on the defensive, clear cooperation, prompt fire support for adjacent subunits, boldness and initiative in combat.

On 13 March at 0900 hours, a group of enemy divebombers attacked Rogan. At the same time the roar of artillery fire sounded from Rogan Farm. For clearing up the situation, the battalion commander immediately sent out in this direction a reconnaissance patrol of five sub-machine gunners. At 1100 hours, the scouts reported that Nazi tanks and motorized infantry had broken into Rogan Farm from the northwest and the first battalion of the 1288th Rifle Regiment defending it under enemy pressure had pulled back to the eastern bank of the Roganka. At this time, the commander of the 4th Rifle Company informed them that 50 soldiers from the 1288th Rifle Regiment had pulled back to the positions of his subunit. Having assessed the situation in the area of the adjacent unit to the right, the battalion commander drew the correct conclusion that the greatest danger was arising precisely on the battalion's right flank and he immediately reinforced the small 4th Rifle Company with this group of soldiers. He instructed the commander of the battery of 203-mm guns to prepare fire against the southern edge of Rogan Farm.

At 1140 hours, three enemy tanks appeared around the mound with the marker +4.2 on the Kharkov Highway. They advanced cautiously, stopping frequently. A 45-mm gun which was on elev. 177.6, at a range of 400-500 m opened fire and after several rounds hit the lead tank. The others stopped and soon retreated to the other side of the railroad embankment.⁶ At 1230 hours, 24 Nazi aircraft appeared over Rogan and these dropped high explosive and incendiary bombs. As a result, a portion of the buildings in the population point was destroyed and fire broke out. The bombing did not cause any particular harm to the battalion personnel, since the soldiers were in trenches a significant distance away from the buildings.

At 1300 hours, under the cover of heavy artillery and mortar fire, up to a battalion of infantry with 20 tanks from Rogan Farm attacked the battle formations of the 4th Rifle Company. Upon the orders of the battalion commander, the batteries of 203-mm howitzers and 76-mm cannons opened fire against the advancing enemy. As it approached the forward defensive edge, the crews of the mortars, antitank guns and medium machine guns entered combat. Suffering great losses, the Nazis moved forward slowly. By 1500 hours they had pressed the battle outposts of the 4th Rifle Company but were unable to advance further. The enemy infantry was cut off from the tanks by solid rifle and machine gun fire and lay down in open terrain some 200-300 m from the forward defensive edge.

For providing aid to the infantry, the enemy tanks, firing on the move, advanced. Some seven Nazi tanks were knocked out by the fire of the antitank rifles and the cannon battery firing with direct laying.⁷ However, four enemy tanks succeeded in breaking into the company's position. Benefiting from this, the

enemy infantry rose to the attack. An extremely dangerous situation developed on the battalion's right flank.

Capt Cherkashin immediately dispatched a special messenger to the regiment commander to report the situation and asked for help for the battalion by the firing of the divisional artillery and the supplying of the required amount of ammunition for the guns and mortars. At the most crucial moment of combat, the battalion was reinforced by seven tanks from the 25th Tank Brigade which had been sent here by the division commander. The battalion commander immediately gave them the mission of counterattacking the enemy.⁸

The artillery and mortar batteries, upon the orders from the battalion commander, intensified the fire against the attacking Nazi infantry and tanks which had broken into the defenses of the 4th Rifle Company. By a decisive attack by the tanks and infantry, the enemy was driven out of the company's defensive area and, in suffering great losses, began to pull back toward Rogan Farm.

At 1700 hours, around 40 enemy aircraft reappeared over Rogan. With their sirens turned on, they dove at the population point trying to demoralize our troops. The battalion's subunits remained in their positions ready to repel new attacks.

The aircraft were still circling in the air, when the Nazi tanks and infantry again went into the attack. Six heavy tanks with an infantry party attacked the right flank of the 4th Company while seven tanks and around a company of infantry advanced in the direction of the mound with the marker +1.4. At this same time, up to a company of tanks with infantry attacked the 6th Rifle Company along the Kharkov Highway.⁹ By simultaneous actions from different directions, the enemy was counting on breaking through the battalion's defenses and clearing the road to Chuguyev.

By organized fire of the antitank weapons and small arms in the defensive area of the 6th Rifle Company, the enemy attack was driven off. Leaving a damaged tank and scores of bodies on the battlefield, the Nazis retreated. In this battle the enemy heavy tanks represented the greatest threat for the battalion. Regardless of the heavy fire by the 203-mm and 76-mm guns, at 1730 hours they reached the northern edge of Rogan and opened up flanking fire against the 4th Rifle Company which by this time had suffered great losses in the course of the intense battles (15 soldiers, 2 antitank rifles and 1 medium machine gun had been knocked out).¹⁰

Being without powerful antitank weapons in the battle formations, this time the company was unable to check the enemy advancing tanks and infantry and began to pull back in the southwesterly direction. A threat of outflanking the right flank of the battalion had arisen. For restoring the situation, the battalion commander ordered his reserve by a counterattack to destroy the enemy infantry which had broken through toward the east edge of Rogan. The mortar company which had consumed all its ammunition was given the mission of reaching the northern edge of Rogan and covering the retreat of the 4th Rifle Company by rifle and sub-machine gun fire. The tanks which at this time were on the western edge of Rogan were given the mission of counterattacking the enemy infantry

and tanks which had approached the northern edge of this population point. The artillery batteries were ordered to support the tank counterattack.

By the decisive actions of the mortar company, by the heavy fire of the cannon battery which fired at the enemy tanks at point-blank range as well as by the firing of the machine guns and the 45-mm gun from the area of marker 177.6, the Nazi advance was stopped. At this same time, our tanks had reached the northern edge of Rogan, they quickly reformed into battle formation and went over to the counterattack. The Nazis could not withstand the rapid attack of our subunits and, leaving four tanks and scores of bodies on the battlefield, pulled back to Rogan Farm.¹¹ The reserve of the battalion commander (a mixed platoon of sub-machine gunners), a brief battle cleared the eastern edge of Rogan of the enemy infantry. The retreating 4th Rifle Company was able to halt and deploy for the defensive 100 m to the north of the Kharkov Highway. Thus, the position on the battalion's right flank was significantly restored.

With the onset of darkness, the enemy infantry again attacked the northern edge of Rogan. A fierce battle broke out. By rifle and machine gun fire, the mortar troops repelled the thrust of the enemy which was endeavoring to break through to the firing positions of the 203-mm guns. Considering the developing situation, the battalion commander ordered the commander of the battery of 203-mm guns under the cover of the mortar company to change firing positions. Regardless that individual groups of enemy sub-machine gunners succeeded in breaking through the battle formations of the mortar company and capturing several houses on the northwestern edge of Rogan, the submachine gunners supported the changing of firing positions by the battery of 203-mm guns.

At 2300 hours after heavy artillery and mortar fire along the entire front of the battalion, the enemy infantry and tanks which were on the northern edge of Rogan again went over to the offensive and began to press the mortar company. At the same time, up to a platoon of enemy sub-machine gunners crossed the river and reached the southern edge of Rogan. There was a real threat of the encirclement of the battalion.

Considering that during all the combat the enemy had not shown any particular activity in the area of the 5th Rifle Company, the battalion commander ordered the company's commander to leave a rifle platoon in the defensive area as a battle outpost and with the remaining forces along with the mortar company to counterattack the enemy which had seized the northern edge of Rogan. The commander of the 5th Rifle Company gave the mission to the battle outposts, he led the remaining personnel of the company to the western edge of Rogan and through a liaison officer established contact with the mortar company. Soon both subunits went over to the counterattack. Our rifle and mortar troops boldly attacked the Nazi sub-machine gunners which had occupied the buildings. By 2400 hours, the northern and northwestern edges of Rogan had been cleared of the enemy. The enemy sub-machine gunners which had penetrated to the southern edge of Rogan also could not stand the rapid attack by the reserve of the battalion commander and retreated to the eastern bank of the Roganka. The situation had been restored.

At this time a messenger from the regimental commander had reached the battalion commander who was on the western edge of Rogan. The messenger brought

an order to take up a new defensive line along the line of elevs. 177.8, 176.0, elev. 174.2. During the night the battalion's subunits retreated in an organized manner and took up the new defensive area.

Subsequently, from intelligence data it was learned that the battalion with reinforcements, in checking the advance of the motorized infantry regiment and the tank battalion from the tank division Toten Kopf destroyed 17 tanks and up to 300 soldiers and officers.¹²

Thus, regardless of the limited time, the battalion commander and his staff were able to organize an effective fire plan, precise cooperation with the supporting artillery and later also tanks. The well thought out fire plan made it possible to hit the enemy both on the approaches and directly ahead of the forward edge and ensured the repelling of attacks by superior Nazi forces.

The steadfastness and tenacity of the men on the defensive were the result of well-coordinated actions by the subunits and the high morale of all the personnel.

The most important conditions for the successful repelling of the enemy attacks were the well-organized control of the subunits by the battalion commander, the high activeness, mutual help of the defending subunits and the bold maneuvering of the personnel and fire in the course of combat.

FOOTNOTES

¹ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 1311, inv. 1, file 14, sheet 1.

² Ibid., sheet 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., sheet 3.

⁶ Ibid., sheet 14.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., sheet 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., sheet 10.

¹² Ibid., sheet 12.

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DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET NAVY PRIOR TO PATRIOTIC WAR ANALYZED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 65-72

[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Docent, Capt 1st Rank P. Golubev: "Measures of the Communist Party to Develop and Strengthen the Soviet Navy on the Eve of the Great Patriotic War (1937-1941)"]

[Text] The CPSU, loyal to Lenin's teachings on the defense of the socialist fatherland, has always given and does give constant attention to strengthening the Soviet Armed Forces. This was also the case in the 1930's which were characterized by a sharp exacerbation of the international situation and an increased military threat for our motherland from the most aggressive imperialist states. Proceeding from the geographic situation of the USSR as a great seapower, the party gave great importance to the development of the Navy. Moreover, in the imperialist camp during this period, the production of naval weapons increased sharply and in particular the orders for naval shipbuilding rose greatly. While over the 15 years, from 1917 through 1932, the basic capitalist powers laid down a total of 655 naval ships of various classes, over the 7-year period, from 1932 through 1939, the number was 1,300.¹ In 1939, the navy of Nazi Germany consisted of 4 battleships, 11 cruisers, 37 destroyers and 57 submarines. In addition, 2 submarines, 2 aircraft carriers, 4 cruisers and so forth were under construction.²

Imperialist Japan was also carrying out an enormous shipbuilding program to increase the size of the navy. In 1939, its ship strength included 10 battleships, 10 carriers, 35 cruisers, 106 destroyers and 58 submarines. Naval aviation had around 1,000 aircraft of the first line and 300 in reserve. In addition to this, 1 carrier, 2 cruisers, 8 destroyers and 8 submarines were under construction.³ Fascist Italy also had a very intense program in the area of naval shipbuilding.⁴ By the start of World War II, its navy numbered 269 major surface ships and submarines.

Quite understandably, the Soviet Union could not remain indifferent to the feverish pace of arming the capitalist states. In conducting a constant policy of preserving peace, our party and government were forced to take measures to ensure the security of our frontiers, to develop and strengthen the Soviet Armed Forces, including the Navy. The documents of a session of the USSR Supreme Soviet held in January 1938 stated that "the mighty Soviet state

should have a sea and ocean fleet corresponding to its interests and worthy of our great cause."⁵

Particularly extensive work in the area of naval development was carried out in 1937-1941. At the end of 1937, the elaboration of the plans for the development of the Navy for the Third Five-Year Plan was completed, and a quantitative and qualitative growth in the branches of naval forces was set. Here the Communist Party and the Soviet government proceeded from the historic achievements of the Soviet people in building socialism and from the economic capabilities of the nation. In the course of carrying out the plan, consideration was given to the directions and trends in world shipbuilding and also to the development of naval weaponry among our probable enemies. On the basis of this a prompt and correct conclusion was drawn, in particular, on the increased combat capabilities of submarines and aviation and on that role which they would play in a war at sea.

The core of the military shipbuilding program for 1938-1942 was the construction of large surface vessels which would be the equal in speed, weapons and other performance to the ships under construction by the capitalist states. In 1938, designing was completed and the first Soviet battleship was laid down of the "Sovetskiy Soyuz" class with a tonnage of more than 65,000 tons and a speed of 28 knots. There were plans to arm it with 9 406-mm caliber guns, 12 anti-aircraft 100-mm guns and 32 37-mm automatic guns. The ship was to have heavy armoring.

In 1940, plans were approved for the heavy cruiser of the "Kronshtadt" class. This was caused by the need to have in the fleet a ship capable of successfully countering the enemy cruisers and support the combat operations of our light forces, including on the enemy lines of communications. Proceeding from the combat purpose, the ordnance of the heavy cruiser included: 9 305-mm guns, 8 152-mm ones, 8 100-mm ones and 24 37-mm automatic guns. The displacement tonnage of the ship was 38,000 tons and the speed was 33 knots. It was assumed that precisely these and other similar ships would be the basis of the combat might of the Soviet Navy.

Also undergoing development were such classes of ships as leaders, destroyers, patrol boats as well as submarines. In 1939, the submarines under construction were represented by five basic classes: "K," "L," "S," "Shch" and "M." In terms of their specifications, particularly in the area of ordnance, the Soviet combat ships were the equal of foreign ships.⁶

In accord with the annual programs which were approved by the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee and the USSR SNK [Council of People's Commissars], by the start of the war there were 219 ships on the ways in various stages of completion. These included: 3 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, 10 cruisers, 45 destroyers, 91 submarines and so forth.⁷

For better management of construction of the large fleet, in December 1937, the People's Commissariat for the Shipbuilding Industry was established. Upon instructions of the Politburo of the VKP(b) Central Committee, a number of decisions was adopted aimed at developing and strengthening the physical plant of shipbuilding. This problem was resolved primarily by expanding and

completing the technical reconstruction of the existing shipbuilding yards and accelerating the pace of completing new shipbuilding facilities as well as increasing the number of subcontracting plants. Around 200 plants of the other people's commissariats were involved in building the ships. Also working for the needs of the Navy were such giants of Soviet industry as the Kirov Plant, the Neva Plant, the Plant imeni V. I. Lenin, Elektrosila, as well as the Kharkov Electric Turbine Plant, the Izhorsk Plant, the Mariupol Plant and a whole series of other plants in the nation.⁸ Extensive work was carried out to provide the shipbuilding industry with personnel, to increase their production skills and to develop labor activity. All of this made it possible to significantly increase production capacity in the shipbuilding industry. The growth rates of its annual gross product at that time were characterized by the following data: in using 1937 as 100 percent, in 1938 the output of gross product was 112 percent, in 1939 it was 160 percent, in 1940 it was 228 percent and according to the 1941 plan should have reached 300 percent.⁹

With the start of World War II on 1 September 1939 and considering that a great deal of time is needed to build large ships, the VKP(b) Central Committee and the USSR SNK on 19 October 1940 adopted a decision to sharply cut back on the number of battleships and cruisers to be built. The shipbuilding efforts were to be focused on the rapid development of light naval forces and this produced positive results. Already by the first half of 1941, industry provided the navy with a light cruiser, 9 destroyers, 2 minesweepers, 16 small subchasers, 5 torpedo boats, 15 minesweeping boats, 2 net tenders and 6 submarines.¹⁰ As a total from 1938 through June 1941, the sailors received more than 300 new combat ships of various classes.¹¹

The development of the aviation industry provided an opportunity to increase and improve the naval aviation. However, by the start of 1941, the naval aviation was basically equipped with bombers, torpedo planes, reconnaissance planes and fighters which had been received in 1934-1938 and which for many indicators were obsolete. The new IL-2, Pe-2 and MIG-3 aircraft in terms of their most important specifications surpassed the foreign aircraft but there still were few of them. The lack of special naval aircraft limited the use of the basic naval forces within the ranges of the air enemy.

The coastal and antiaircraft defenses of the fleet were strengthened. In 1940 alone, 86 new coastal batteries and 92 air defense batteries were built. By the start of the war, the coastal defense artillery numbered over 1,000 guns of different caliber.

Successful work was also carried out to develop the most advanced types of weapons and combat equipment. The development of ship and shore artillery occurred basically by developing new models of guns of the main, auxiliary and antiaircraft calibers as well as universal, stabilized and multibarrel units, increasing their invulnerability, perfecting the fire control instruments and the new optical observation devices. The development of torpedoes was subordinate to the requirements of increasing the speed and range of the torpedo, its concealment and accuracy of fire. Mine weapons were developed in the direction of further increasing the laying depth, the power of the charge and achieving greater invulnerability and antisweeping stability. The Navy was also supplied with communications which successfully withstood the test under the harsh wartime conditions.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government adopted measures to develop new navigating areas, to extend the system of ship basing and for logistical support of the naval forces in all the naval theaters, particularly in the Northern Fleet. The Navy was given great help in carrying out this task by its sponsor, the Lenin Komsomol. At the end of 1939, the People's Commissariat of the Navy forwarded to the VKP(b) Central Committee a letter over the signature of the people's commissar, N. G. Kuznetsov, requesting that the Komsomol be more widely involved in the construction of military engineer facilities in the fleets. The letter stated: "For ensuring the recruitment of the best personnel and tested young workers (construction workers, unskilled workers, machinists, mechanics, carpenters and so forth) we request that instructions be given by the Komsomol Central Committee for the assuming of Komsomol sponsorship of the construction of naval bases."¹² This request was granted. Upon instructions of the party Central Committee, the Komsomol Central Committee in 1939-1940 sent over 19,000 young construction workers to build naval facilities.¹³ They, along with the sailors, worked heroically to build piers and docks, they created ship repair facilities and participated in equipping the naval theaters. More than 500 electric beacons, fanal-acetylene lights and other navigation markers were set out just on the Arctic islands and the northern coast of the nation.¹⁴ Over 2,500 Komsomol members were sent to accelerate the completion of one of the ship repair yards.¹⁵ This helped to complete a number of leading shops at the enterprise in 1939.¹⁶ In emphasizing the important significance of completing the ship repair facilities in the Northern Naval Theater, PRAVDA on 6 June 1939 wrote: "The mighty fleet plying the polar seas should not each year make long trips to Leningrad for repairs." In 1940, four bases were extended and three newly created on the Black Sea and new basing areas were developed on the Baltic Sea.

In line with the change in the western frontiers of the Soviet Union, the need arose to reinforce them. Upon the decision of the party and government, in June 1940, the Pinsk and Danube Naval Flotillas were organized. The Northern Fleet was significantly strengthened. In 1939-1940 it received 15 combat vessels, predominantly destroyers and submarines.¹⁷

Regardless of the fact that not the entire construction program had been completed, by the beginning of the Great Patriotic War the USSR Navy in quantitative and qualitative terms represented a powerful force (see the table).

The fleet also had a certain number of auxiliary craft but there were not enough of them. In order to make up for the existing lack, the Defense Committee under the USSR SNK on 25 May 1940 decreed that the civilian fleet in 1940-1941 would transfer 74 ships to the Baltic Fleet, 76 to the Black Sea Fleet, 101 to the Pacific Fleet and 65 to the Northern Fleet. A portion of these was reequipped as escort vessels, minesweepers, minelayers and other combat ships. They were armed with machine guns and in certain instances also with artillery. However, time showed that the fleets lacked minesweepers, ASW ships and special escort vessels (SKR). All our fleets approached the war without having a single specially built landing craft. The fleets also did not have special artillery surface ships designed for the fire support of an amphibious landing. All of this limited the capabilities of the fleet in carrying out landing missions. The need for this arose from the very first days of the Great Patriotic War.

Effective Strength of the Soviet Navy on 22 June 1941*

Branch of Forces and Classes of Ships	Northern Fleet	Baltic Fleet	Black Sea Fleet	Pacific Fleet	Total
Surface ships					
Ships of the line	--	2	1	--	3
Cruisers	--	2	5	--	7
Leaders and destroyers	8	21	16	14	59
Torpedo boats	2	48	84	135	269
Escort boats	7	7	2	6	22
Gun boats	--	1	4	--	5
Minelayers	1	6	3	8	18
Minesweepers	2	33	15	30	80
Monitors	--	--	5	--	5
Armored boats	--	4	22	--	26
Subchasers	15	15	28	19	77
Minewsweeping boats	--	.	7	46	.
Patrol boats	.	18	.	.	.
Net tenders	--	2	--	2	4
Submarines	15	65	47	91	218
Aviation (all types of aircraft)	116	656	626	1,183	2,581

* The table has been taken from the book: "Boyevoy put' Sovetskogo Voenno-Morskogo Flota" [The Campaign Record of the Soviet Navy], p 537.

The dot in the table indicates a lack of precise data.

Extensive work was done to provide the fleet with a sufficient amount of command personnel and specialists. Upon the instructions of the party Central Committee, a decision was adopted to train the necessary personnel for the large fleet being built. In accord with this decision and other party and government documents, at the end of the 1930's the network of naval schools was significantly enlarged. As of 1939, these became higher schools. Brief courses were set up for the training and retraining of commanders and a number of special mobilizations (recruitments) of naval personnel was conducted. Just in the period from 1939 through 1941, this made it possible to increase the officer corps by more than 73 percent.¹⁸ During the 3 prewar years, the naval schools alone graduated more than 5,600 commanders who were sent to the ships and the naval units. In 1939, a commission headed by the chief of the Military Department of the Komsomol Central Committee, S. Ye. Zakharov, carried out a decision of the VKP(b) Central Committee to mobilize 20,000 Komsomol members for the Navy, and of this number almost 3,000 were assigned to command positions. S. Ye. Zakharov himself was appointed a member of the Military Council of the Pacific Fleet. In 1940, there was a special call-up for political workers for the navy. During the period from 1938 until the start of the war, the Navy received more than 5,300 political workers.

By 22 June 1941, the manning level of the basic specialties on the ships with command personnel had reached almost 100 percent. A predominant majority of the command personnel came from the workers, kolkhoz members and white collar personnel. Communists comprised a large portion of them (62 percent). They possessed high moral-political and combat qualities, they excelled in total dedication to the motherland and were ready to defend its liberty and independence.

The Law Governing Universal Military Service approved by the Soviet government on 1 September 1939 was of great importance in providing the Navy with personnel. According to this law the induction age for the youth was reduced from 21 to 19 and to 18 for those who had completed secondary school. This made it possible to immediately induct young men of three ages (18, 19 and 20 years) into the Navy ranks. An ordered system of training detachments was established in the fleets and here they trained specialists and junior command personnel. In the postwar years, more than 75 percent of the specialists arrived on the ships and naval units from here.

The command, the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations conducted enormous work for re-enlistment and as a result of this in 1938 alone, the ranks of re-enlisted personnel increased by 21,336 persons. Around 60 percent of them were communists and Komsomol members.¹⁹ This truly was the gold stock of the Navy. On the eve of the war on certain submarines re-enlisted personnel comprised up to three-quarters of the entire crew.

In accord with the Ukase of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet "On the Periods of Active Service in the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army]" (May 1939), the length of service for naval personnel increased up to 5 years on the ships, up to 4 years in the signals and coastal artillery units and up to 3 years in the special Navy units. This made it possible to significantly increase the combat skill of the seamen and petty officers and to multiply the number of highly skilled specialists on the ships and in the units.

The social organizations, and primarily the Komsomol, together with Osoaviakhim [Society for Assistance to Defense, Aviation and Chemical Construction] developed extensive work to prepare the youth for naval service. In 1940, almost 60,000 worker youths and students in the senior grades of secondary schools were studying naval affairs in 66 training points and 1,348 circles.²⁰

In the aim of creating reserves for supplying the naval schools with a trained contingent of students, on 22 July 1940 the USSR SNK adopted the Decree "On Organizing Special Secondary Naval Schools." These were opened in Moscow, Leningrad, Vladivostok, Baku, Odessa, Kiev and Gorkiy. During the same year, students were recruited for the 8th-10th grades of these schools. The special schools provided the first students for the higher naval schools at the beginning of the war. Major measures were carried out to reorganize the command and control bodies. For better leadership of the Navy, on 30 December 1937, a decree of the USSR TsIK [Central Executive Committee] and the SNK set up the independent all-Union People's Commissariat of the Navy which was headed by P. A. Smirnov (January-August 1938) and M. P. Frinovskiy (September 1938-March 1939). In April 1939, N. G. Kuznetsov was appointed the People's Commissar of the Navy.

In accord with the Decree of the USSR TsIK and SNK of 10 May 1937, the institution of military councils was instituted in the fleets and in April 1938 the Main Military Council of the Navy was established. Its members included the Politburo member and secretary of the VKP(b) Central Committee A. A. Zhdanov who made a major contribution to the development and strengthening of the Navy. Proof of the great attention given by the party to the organizational development of the Navy was the admitting of the commander of the Baltic Fleet (V. F. Tributs), the commander of the Black Sea Fleet (F. S. Oktyabr'skiy) and the commander of the Pacific Fleet (I. S. Yumashev) as members of the party Central Committee in February 1941 at the 18th Party Conference.

The Political Directorate which was established at the end of 1937 became the Main Political Directorate of the Navy (1939). It was headed by the experienced political worker I. V. Rogov. The military political bodies were very important centers for carrying out the party line in improving political and military indoctrination of the personnel and for increasing the combat readiness of the navy ships and units.

The Main Naval Staff underwent reorganization. In particular, in 1940, under it a directorate for combat training was established and this provided an opportunity to more effectively plan and carry out the measures to increase the combat readiness and capability of the naval forces. On 11 November 1939, the People's Commissariat of the Navy introduced a system of operational alerts which envisaged effective measures to prevent and repel a surprise military attack.

The development of the Navy required a revision of the views on the methods of the preparation and combat employment of its diverse forces and weapons in combating a sea enemy. For this purpose in 1937, a new Field Manual of the RKKA Navy (BUMS-37) was introduced and this was worked out considering the experience acquired by our Navy in the course of combat training. It reflected the advances made in the development of Soviet naval art. The basic provisions of the manual were oriented at the actual composition of the Navy proceeding from an objective assessment of the role and place of the Navy in the overall system of the USSR Armed Forces. There, in particular, it was pointed out that the Navy is a component part of the Armed Forces; its mission includes: assisting the Red Army units, repelling enemy actions from the sea sectors against our coast, creating favorable conditions for the actions of our forces in the sea theater, affecting the enemy economy by disrupting its sea and ocean lines of communications. The manual gave great attention to the cooperation of the diverse naval forces.

It was demanded that all naval operations, including the carrying out of defensive tasks, be permeated with an offensive spirit. "The constant desire to engage the enemy for the purpose of destroying it should lie at the basis of the indoctrination and actions of each commander and seaman of the naval forces," emphasized the manual. "Without any special orders the enemy should be boldly and rapidly attacked everywhere it is discovered."²¹

The Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-1940 was a severe testing for the combat capabilities of the Baltic and Northern Fleets. In the course of combat, a number of shortcomings was discovered in working out the combat training tasks. The

March Plenum of the VKP(b) Central Committee (1940), on the basis of the results of military operations, analyzed the state of combat training and troop indoctrination in the Army and Navy and reached the conclusion that troop combat readiness had lagged behind the requirements of modern warfare. The plenum issued specific instructions aimed at eliminating the shortcomings and demanded that the troops be taught what is required in war.

In light of the instructions of the Plenum of the VKP(b) Central Committee, the main military council of the navy at a session assessed fleet combat operations and worked out measures to eliminate the shortcomings which had occurred in the course of the combat employment of the Navy. The adopted resolution "On Using the Experience of Combat Operations of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the Northern Fleet" pointed to the need of theoretically generalizing all that was new and all that enriched naval art as a result of introducing new equipment in the Navy and the experience of its combat employment. The task was set of fundamentally improving the training of command personnel on the operations level and critically reviewing the work of the military councils and higher leadership. The task was set of ending seasonal combat training under simplified conditions and increasing the intensity of combat training on the ships and in the units.²²

The decisions of the Main Military Council were actively carried out. At the end of 1940, the "Temporary Regulation on the Conduct of Naval Operations" was put into effect and also certain provisions of the 1938 Navy Field Manual were clarified.

In 1940, under the Naval Academy courses were established for the advanced training of the superior command personnel. A large number of military games, assemblies and exercises was conducted in the fleets. There was an active exchange of experience in staff work in the pages of the journal MORSKOY SBORNIK, the newspaper KRASNYY FLOT and the combat training bulletin. All the personnel studied the new equipment and weapons. Combat training began to be conducted year-round and its intensity increased. Thus, while in 1939, 5 detachment exercises and 67 tactical ones were conducted, in the following year their number, respectively, was 13 and 104.²³

The chief content of naval combat training was the working out of naval combat tactics, the organization of a combined attack by the gunnery boats, torpedo boats, aviation and submarines against enemy groupings in the open sea and at mine-gunnery stations, the attacking of enemy ships, forces, bases and ports, as well as landing and antilanding operations. Many measures were carried out to develop the system of operational alerts. In the autumn of 1940, major exercises and maneuvers were conducted in the fleets and flotillas and here special attention was paid to working out the tactical procedures of employing new types of weapons. In December of the same year, assemblies were held for the commanders and the members of the fleet military councils. These summed up the results of combat training, they set the tasks for 1941 and also reviewed certain questions of the theory and experience of modern warfare.

Under the conditions of the increased military danger, the Communist Party strengthened indoctrinational work with the personnel. Here an important role was assigned to the fleet military councils. In 1940, the secretaries of

certain oblast, kray and republic party organizations were included in their membership. In May of the same year, military councils were established in the Caspian and Red Banner Amur Flotillas. On the remaining flotillas, as in the ship formations and units, party political work was directed by the political sections. By 1941, there were over 180 of them in the Navy.²⁴ Overall leadership over the political and military indoctrination of the personnel was carried out by the Main Political Directorate of the Navy which operated under the status of the Naval Section of the VKP(b) Central Committee. The introduction of the institution of deputy political instructors upon the decision of the party Central Committee in 1938 also had a positive influence on the organizing of political and military indoctrination for the personnel.

The work of strengthening the party and Komsomol organizations was a particular concern for the party. Of exceptionally important significance in carrying out this task were the decisions of the 18th VKP(b) Congress as well as the decrees of the party Central Committee on the admission to the party of Red Armymen, officer candidates of military schools and junior commander schools (February 1938) and for eliminating shortcomings in the leadership of local party organizations in the admission of new VKP(b) members (July 1940).

By 1941, the number of Navy party organizations had risen by more than 3-fold in comparison with 1938 and was around 70,000 members and candidate members of the VKP(b) brought together in 2,375 primary party organizations and groups. Viable party organizations were established on all ships (down to ships of the 3d class), in the air flights and in the shore defense companies and batteries. A characteristic feature of them was the fact that they were basically formed from Red Navymen and petty officers (on 1 January 1940, the rank-and-file and junior command personnel in first-term and career service were 64.3 percent of the total number of Navy communists).²⁵

The organizational structure was improved and the effectiveness of party leadership over the Navy Komsomol increased. Here an exceptionally important role was played by the Decision of the VKP(b) Central Committee "On Work Among the RKKKA Komsomol Members" (January 1938). A Section for Work Among Komsomol Members was set up under the Main Political Directorate of the Navy, and in all the political directorates of the fleets, the political sections of the flotillas and formations, positions were established for deputy chiefs of the political bodies for work among the Komsomol. This helped to significantly improve Komsomol work and to raise the role of the Komsomol as the party's assistant in carrying out the tasks of military and political training.

From 1938 through 1940, the number of Navy Komsomol rose by more than 137,000.²⁶ In the Navy, there was not a single ship, unit or even subunit which did not have a Komsomol organization. At the start of 1941, in the Navy there were 2,465 Komsomol organizations in operation and these brought together in their ranks almost 200,000 Komsomol members. Komsomol members comprised more than 60 percent of the personnel.²⁷

In improving the forms and methods of party political work, the Communist Party directed the efforts of the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations at indoctrinating the personnel in a spirit of loyalty to the ideas of

Marxism-Leninism, in a spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism and at inculcating in the commanders and Red Navymen high moral-combat qualities. It mobilized the personnel to maintain the combat equipment and weapons in constant combat readiness.

Due to the measures carried out by the party in the prewar years, the Navy during the entire Great Patriotic War successfully carried out the missions confronting it and made a worthy contribution to defeating the enemy.

Under present-day conditions, the Communist Party is vigilantly following the intrigues of imperialism. In using prewar experience, it is taking measures to increase the combat might of the Soviet Armed Forces. "In consistently defending the cause of peace and the security of peoples," stated the Decree of the CPSU Central Committee "On the 80th Anniversary of the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party," "the CPSU and the Soviet government at the same time are aware that as long as imperialism refuses to abandon the goal of upsetting the existing balance of forces and recovering military supremacy, it is important to provide the Soviet Armed Forces with everything necessary to defend the USSR, its allies and friends. In following the legacy of Lenin, the Communist Party and the Soviet state have constantly shown high vigilance and have taken the necessary measures to strengthen the defense capability of our motherland."²⁸

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ KRASNYI FLOT, 30 January 1941.
- ² MORSKOY SBORNIK, No 8, 1972, p 15.
- ³ Ibid., p 16.
- ⁴ "Voyennoye iskusstvo vo vtoroy mirovoy voyne" [Military Art in World War II], Moscow, Izd. Voennoy akademii imeni K. Ye. Voroshilova, 1973, p 108.
- ⁵ "Pervaya sessiya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 12-19 Yanvarya 1938 g. Stenograficheskiy otchet" [First Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet 12-19 January 1938. Verbatim Report], Moscow, Izd. Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1938, p 114.
- ⁶ "Istoriya voyenno-morskogo iskusstva" [History of Naval Art], Voenizdat, 1969, pp 170-173; MORSKOY SBORNIK, No 8, 1972, p 19.
- ⁷ MORSKOY SBORNIK, No 8, 1972, p 18; No 10, 1967, p 57.
- ⁸ "XVIII s"yezd VKP(b). Stenograficheskiy otchet" [The 18th Congress of the VKP(b). Verbatim Report], 1939, pp 427-428.
- ⁹ Ye. F. bystrov, "Voprosy teorii i praktiki stroitel'stva Voenno-Morskogo Flota v dovoennyye pyatiletki (1929-1941)" [Questions in the Theory and Practice of the Organizational Development of the Navy in the Prewar Five-Year Plans (1929-1941)], Moscow, Izd. VPS, 1974, p 59.

- 10 "Boyevoy put' Sovetskogo Voenno-Morskogo flota" [Campaign Record of the Soviet Navy], Voenizdat, 1974, p 142.
- 11 "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny" [History of World War II], Vol 3, p 386; "Boyevoy put' Sovetskogo...", p 142.
- 12 TsGA VMF [Central State Archives of the Navy], folio 1687, inv. 1, file 91, sheet 621.
- 13 TsA VLKSM [Central Archives of the Komsomol], folio 1, inv. 3, file 226, sheet 51; TsGA VMF, folio 1687, inv. 1, file 106, sheet 51.
- 14 TsPA IML [Central Party Archives of the Marxism-Leninism Institute], folio 475, inv. 1, file 15, sheet 54.
- 15 Ibid., inv. 2, file 836, sheet 30.
- 16 Ibid., file 1173, sheet 25.
- 17 TsGA VMF, folio 1877, inv. 2, file 836, sheet 30.
- 18 Ibid., folio 1687, inv. 1, file 229, sheet 4.
- 19 Ibid., folio 34, inv. 6, file 828, sheet 67; folio 1877, inv. 1, file 339, sheet 9.
- 20 TsGAOR [Central State Archives of the October Revolution], folio 8355, inv. 6, file 97, sheet 37.
- 21 Quoted in MORSKOY SBORNIK, No 2, 1967, pp 13-14.
- 22 TsGA VMF, folio 1877, inv. 1, file 52, sheets 158-170.
- 23 Ibid., folio 864, inv. 1, file 172, sheet 50.
- 24 Ibid., folio 1549, inv. 1, file 171, sheets 90-92.
- 25 Ibid., file 186, sheet 3.
- 26 Ibid., file 80, sheet 5.
- 27 Ibid., file 88, sheet 4.
- 28 PRAVDA, 5 April 1983.

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WORLD WAR II TRAINING OF RIFLE DIVISIONS BEFORE OFFENSIVE TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 72-77

[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Col M. Pevnevets: "From the Experience of Combat Training for Rifle Divisions Prior to an Offensive in the Third Period of the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] The organizing of combat training for rifle divisions prior to an offensive in the operations of the third period of the Great Patriotic War showed that the changing situational conditions and the developing capacity to conduct combat required an on-going improvement in the forms and methods of troop and staff training. While in the first period of the war, basic attention in the combat training of formations was given to defensive operations and to destroying enemy groupings which had broken through, in the second and third periods the main thing became teaching the troops to basically conduct an offensive with the breaking through of a prepared deeply echeloned defense and maintaining close cooperation between the infantry, tanks, artillery and aviation in the course of exploiting the success in depth.¹

The content of combat training and the forms and methods of conducting it were influenced by many factors, including, the forthcoming combat mission, the presence of time for preparing for combat, the configuration of the enemy defenses and the possible nature of its actions, the particular features of the terrain and season, the number of personnel received for bringing the units up to strength, the degree of their combat training, political-moral state and so forth.

In the concluding period of the war, in organizing the combat training of formations great attention began to be given to its planning and to creating the training facilities. On the basis of an order of the army or corps commander, in a division, as a rule, an order was given for combat training and they worked out the organizational-procedural instructions, a calendar plan and programs for the training of the staffs, the officers and NCO. The following were also defined: the estimating of hours for the training subjects, the training periods and the length of the training day; the sequence and procedure for bringing the subunits and units to the rear for the exercises; the amount of ammunition in tactical exercises with field firing and for individual firing by types of weapons; the dates for creating the training facilities.² Here it

must be pointed out that the time allocated for the planning of combat training in the rifle divisions assigned to an offensive in the first echelon was reduced from operation to operation. Thus, in the formations prepared for the Belorussian, Vistula-Oder and East Prussian Operations, from 2 to 4 days were spent on planning, but in preparing for the Berlin Operation, 1 day.³ The reduced number of planning documents and the increased skills of the staff officers had a positive effect upon shortening the times for working out these documents and improving their quality.

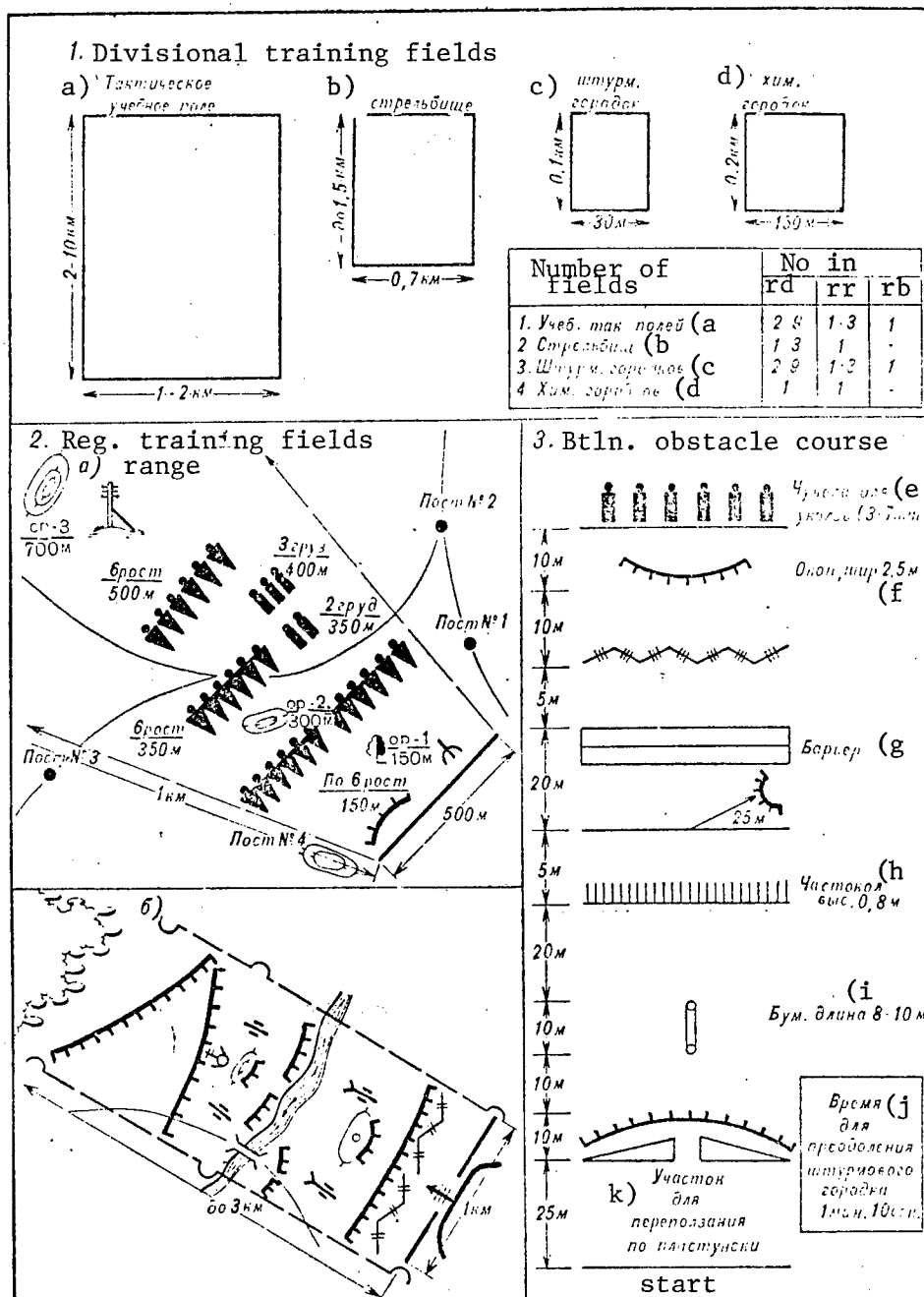
The division's training facilities were created in such a manner so that in the training process they made it possible for the trainees to develop firm skills in mastering the weapons and combat equipment and learn how to employ them under combat conditions and ensured the teamwork of the subunits, units and command and control bodies. The range of training facilities created in rifle divisions on the eve of major offensive operations is shown in the diagram.

As training fields they chose areas of terrain similar to that on which the combat mission would be carried out. These were set up, as a rule, 5-8 km from the forward edge (between the main and second zones of the tactical defensive area). This provided an opportunity for the training units and subunits to promptly reach a threatened sector and conduct combat. In addition to engineer obstacles within the training field there usually was a water barrier, a population point and a wooded area.

The training facilities were usually readied by the forces of the subunits, units and formations with the wide use of captured equipment, local and at-hand materials. In training specialists wider use began to be made of training equipment in the form of mobile classrooms for engineer training, special classrooms, miniature ranges, simulators for training the crews of tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and so forth. The use of this training equipment had a substantial influence on the effectiveness of personnel training, particularly for the tank troops, artillery, combat engineers, radio and telephone operators.

Group exercises, tactical quizzes and special exercises were conducted with the subunit and unit commanders. The obtained knowledge was reinforced in tactical exercises and exercises with field firing. In the aim of increasing the procedural skills for the exercise leaders, procedural training assemblies, instructor-procedural and demonstration exercises were organized. For example, in the course of preparing for the East Prussian Operation, in the 84th Guards Rifle Division of the 11th Guards Army of the Third Belorussian Front, on the basis of the 3d Battalion of the 245th Guards Rifle Regiment, for the commanders of the rifle and artillery regiments a demonstration exercise was held with field firing on the subject "The Offensive of a Reinforced Rifle Battalion Against Prepared Enemy Defenses and the Actions of the Battalion in Depth."⁴

In the aim of increasing the professional skill of the command personnel, analyses of previous battles and operations were widely practiced. In the course of these they thoroughly analyzed the instructive examples of the combat operations of the subunits, units and formations and reviewed the occurring shortcomings. Such exercises were conducted in the 136th, 162d and other rifle divisions of the 70th Army of the Second Belorussian Front on the eve of the Berlin Operation.⁵



Training Fields of a Rifle Division (from experience of 1944-1945)

Key: a--Tactical training field; b--Firing range; c--Assault course; d--Chemical training; e--Bayonet dummies (3-7); f--Trench 2.5 m wide; g--Barrier; h--Palisade; i--Boom 8-10 m long; j--Time for crossing assault course 1 min 10 sec; k--Area for crawling

The basic focus of all the conducted training measures was for the commanders during them to develop tactical thinking, initiative and independence and at

the same time on the basis of combat experience to seek out the most effective combat methods.

During the preparatory period of an offensive, the staffs of the rifle divisions, regiments and battalions and of the attached and supporting units and subunits prepared to provide firm and continuous troop control under the difficult conditions of forthcoming combat. For achieving this goal in training the staffs of rifle divisions, basically two forms of instruction were used: staff trainings and command-staff exercises (KShU).

In the staff trainings the staff officers were trained in the actual execution of functional duties and coordination was developed between the sections and departments, the services and the staff as a whole. The staff trainings in the divisional headquarters were conducted for 2 or 3 hours basically every other day under the leadership of the division's chief of staff and for the staffs of the rifle (artillery) regiments and battalions for 1 or 2 hours two or three times a week.⁶ The subject of the staff trainings encompassed those tasks which the staff had to carry out in fulfilling the specific combat mission.

The command-staff exercises, as a form of joint instruction for the commanders, staffs, the political bodies, the chiefs of the branches of troops and services, for improving their field skills and teamwork in controlling the troops were one- or two- and sometimes three-level, they were conducted, as a rule, in the field with communications equipment. In those formations and units where the situation did not allow the taking to the field for the exercise, the KShU was conducted on maps with the working out of individual elements on terrain mock-ups. The KShU, as a rule, preceded the battalion, regimental and divisional tactical exercises. A one-sided KShU was conducted in a battalion during 6-8 hours, in a regiment for 8-12 hours and in a division for 1 or 2 days under the leadership of their commanders. The two-level or demonstration regimental KShU was led by the division's commander, and the divisional ones by a corps commander. As an average 10-17 different staff exercises were conducted in a rifle division over the preparatory period.⁷

The regimental and divisional KShU worked out comprehensive questions encompassing a broad range of problems related to the organization and conduct of combat actions under various conditions during the day and at night. Thus, in preparing for the East Prussian Operation, the staffs of the rifle divisions worked on the questions of troop control under the conditions of breaking through the enemy defenses with a strong system of fortifications and in preparing for the Vistula-Oder Operation, the breaking through of a developed defensive system echeloned in depth. Before the Berlin Operation in staff training great attention was paid to troop control in conducting combat in a large city.

Experience showed that the tactical skills and teamwork of the subunits and units were the basis of troop combat readiness. In this context chief attention was given to tactical training. Ordinarily 50-60 percent of the entire time limit assigned for combat training was devoted to this.⁸ In the course of tactical training for the subunits, units and formations, battle drill exercises, tactical exercises and tactical drills, including with field firing, were conducted.

In the battle drill exercises with the personnel of the subunits and units, various questions of fighting were worked out initially by elements and then altogether within the designated time. Thus, on the eve of the Belorussian Operation, in all the divisions of the LXIX Rifle Corps of the 49th Army, from 10 through 15 June, each day each rifle regiment ran through several times daily the most complex questions related to breaking through the main enemy defensive zone. In the course of the drills, the regiments learned to cross the engineer-equipped main defensive zone 3-4 km deep in not more than 30 minutes.⁹

The tactical exercises ensured the combat teamwork of the subunits and the improving of commander skills in organizing combat and in controlling subordinates in carrying out the combat mission. The length of one tactical exercise with a squad was 2 or 3 hours and with a platoon 3 or 4 hours. In a squad these were conducted by the platoon commander and in a platoon by the company commander. In a number of instances, the tactical exercises for the squad and platoon were led by their immediate commanders. However, practice showed that the effectiveness of the exercises was higher in the first instance, since not each squad and platoon commander had sufficient educational skills. Moreover, the superior, in conducting the exercises, trained not only the subunit but also its commander.

Tactical exercises were conducted in the aim of improving the skills of the troops, the commanders and staffs, the subunits, units and formations and for preparing them to conduct the coming combat operations. In terms of their scale these were divided into divisional, regimental, battalion and company and they were conducted according to a single overall plan, on varying terrain, during the day and at night and for comprehensive subjects.

The tactical exercises with field firing were a superior form for training the subunits, units, formations and their staffs on the eve of an offensive. These exercises were preceded by the working through of the subject and training questions for the coming combat in ordinary tactical exercises. They represented one-sided tactical exercises with the designated enemy where the fire tasks were carried out with live (regulation) shells, cartridges and grenades. The leader was the commander one level higher than that subunit (unit) for which the exercise was conducted.

A range of various problems was worked on in the exercises with field firing. In the course of them chief attention was given to the ability to combine fire, movement and close cooperation of the units and subunits from different branches of troops. For example, for this purpose, in the 334th Rifle Division of the 43d Army on the eve of the Belorussian Operation, in the period from 10 through 14 June 1944, 35 battalion exercises were conducted including 8 involving the crossing of water obstacles and 9 with field firing. In the exercises the battalions operated with the reinforcements which had been planned for carrying out the actual combat mission.¹⁰

In preparing for the Vistula-Oder Operation, a divisional tactical exercise was conducted involving field firing with a feigned enemy for the 77th Guards Rifle Division of the 69th Army in the First Belorussian Front. This was conducted on 29 December 1944 in a prepared training field 10 km deep and 2 km

wide.¹¹ Umpires from other army formations were appointed for the commanders from the company and above. For simulating the enemy, targets were set up including: 140 head and shoulder targets, 16 light machine guns, 6 medium machine guns, 5 tanks and 8 guns and in depth they simulated the actions of one artillery battery and two mortar batteries. Field firing was carried out in the sector of the 218th Guards Rifle Regiment by the riflemen, sub-machine gunners and machine gunners, by the 82- and 120-mm mortars, by the regimental artillery, by a mortar battery from the 215th Guards Rifle Regiment and a battalion from the 156th Guards Artillery Regiment. Such purposeful training combined with other measures contributed to the division's success in breaking through the enemy defenses. During the first day of the operation, it advanced to a depth of 18 km.

It must be pointed out that all the exercises involving tactical training were conducted under conditions as close as possible to actual combat. Command posts and communications were deployed, camouflage measures were observed and troop cover was organized against enemy air strikes.

Exercises in weapons training in the formations prior to operations were conducted in the form of firing lessons and firing drills. In the firing lessons they studied the rules and procedures of fire, the equipment of the weapons and training was conducted to determine ranges to targets; the personnel of the subunits was instructed in the use of regulation weapons for hitting various targets in combat. Exercises in weapons training were carried out, as a rule, on the training fields.

Snipers, machine gunners, scouts, signal troops, chemical troops, combat engineers and aviation signalers in a rifle division during the preparatory period ordinarily were trained in training assemblies and these contributed to the centralized and best organization of the exercises, to the effective use of the training facilities and to involving experienced and skillful instructors in the instruction. The training assemblies were organized and conducted on the level of the regiment, division and sometimes the army. The personnel involved in the assemblies was broken up into teams or groups by specialties.

The experience acquired by the troops in the concluding period of the war in organizing and carrying out combat training in rifle divisions on the eve of offensive operations is of permanent significance. It merits profound study and can be creatively employed in the combat training of units and formations of the motorized rifle troops under present-day conditions.

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Sbornik boyevykh dokumentov Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War], No 31, Voenizdat, 1957, pp 29-74.

² "Sbornik boyevykh dokumentov...", No 14, 1951, pp 30-34, 102-105; TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 358, inv. 5916, file 96, sheets 127, 142, 146, 147, 163.

- ³ TsAMO SSSR, folio 1636, inv. 1, file 20, sheets 154, 155; folio 1446, inv. 1, file 17, sheet 215; folio 358, inv. 5916, file 434, sheets 245, 257; folio 326, inv. 5047, file 440, sheet 79.
- ⁴ Ibid., folio 358, inv. 5916, file 713, sheets 239, 241.
- ⁵ Ibid., folio 1359, inv. 1, file 19, sheets 72-75.
- ⁶ Ibid., folio 335, file 338, sheet 78; folio 1648, inv. 1, file 159, sheet 76.
- ⁷ "Sbornik takticheskikh primerov po opytu Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny"
[Collection of Tactical Examples from the Experience of the Great Patriotic War], No 1, Voenizdat, 1943, p 130.
- ⁸ TsAMO, folio 394, inv. 9072, file 12, sheet 10; folio 1083, inv. 1, file 38, sheet 141.
- ⁹ Ibid., folio 1494, inv. 1, file 35, sheet 246.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., folio 1648, inv. 1, file 159, sheet 139.
- ¹¹ Ibid., folio 1223, inv. 1, file 31, sheets 323, 317.

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DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD WAR II FLAMETHROWER EQUIPMENT, TACTICS EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 9, Sep 83 (signed to press 23 Aug 83) pp 77-80

[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Docent, Col D. Dmitriyev: "On Certain Ways for Increased Effectiveness of the Combat Employment of Flamethrowers During the Years of the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] During the years of the Great Patriotic War, flamethrowers were successfully employed for attacking enemy infantry and tanks. By the start of the war (although in small amounts) the troops were receiving the ROKS-2 backpack flamethrower of the 1940 model and the ATO-1 automatic tank flamethrower. In July 1941, the static flamethrower FOG-1 began to be received.¹ The backpack flamethrowers were a close combat weapon and designed for destroying enemy infantry while the static ones were used for reinforcing antitank defenses. The flamethrower tanks were basically employed to destroy enemy personnel and guns in shelters.

Combat practices showed that in the course of defensive battles in the initial period of the war, the all-arms commanders did not always correctly assign the place for the backpack flamethrower teams in the battle formations of the rifle subunits and units. In a number of instances these were employed for defending the first trench. But the insignificant range of the backpack flamethrower (35 m) did not provide the desired result. Being in the trench during the period of an enemy offensive, the flamethrower troops for a significant time waited idly for the approach of the enemy to 20-30 m and suffered irrecoverable losses from the weapons of the attackers.² There were instances when the flamethrower companies participated in counterattacks and were even used as a tank mounted party. If flamethrowing was employed in the course of combat, the companies acted independently without cover from the rifle troops.³

The flamethrower tanks which were part of the tank brigades during attacks and counterattacks destroyed and neutralized enemy personnel and weapons located on open terrain and in shelters. Thus, in December 1941, in the zone of the 43d Army of the Western Front a flamethrower tank company in the course of the battle for the village of Romanovo used flamethrowing to destroy four pillboxes with the Nazis inside.⁴

The static flamethrowers were most widely employed in defensive battles from the first period of the war. Their basic mission was to cover the boundaries

and flanks of the defending troops on likely tank approaches. In August 1942, upon the recommendation of the Main Military Chemical Directorate, the flamethrower positions were equipped in the form of "flamethrower clusters" with shortened intervals along the front and with echeloning in depth. Here 5-10 flamethrowers were positioned directly at the demolition point equipped as a pillbox. The interval between such "flamethrower clusters" equaled 100-200 m. The shortened length of the electric wire lines for operating the flamethrowers significantly reduced the probability of their damage by artillery and mortar fire.

In the aim of increasing the density of the flamethrower cover on likely tank approaches and for centralizing command of the separate static flamethrower companies (ORFO), in August 1942 these began to be unified in flamethrower groups which were directly under the army commander. For example, the creation of the flamethrower group in the 57th Army consisting of the 24th and 25th ORFO made it possible to bring on 25 August the density of the static flamethrowers on the line of Shchetinin Farm, Solyanka up to 70 flamethrowers per kilometer of front.⁵

For increasing the maneuverability of the static flamethrowers, particularly in the last stage of the defense of Stalingrad, mobile flamethrower units were effectively used. The static flamethrowers mounted on improvised wheeled or ski devices were employed mainly for reinforcing lines captured by counter-attacking groups, for covering flanks between the subunits and burning the enemy out of pillboxes and various structures. The ORFO were used on a decentralized basis in street battles. They were broken up into squads and included in the assault groups.

In the second period of the Great Patriotic War, companies of backpack flamethrowers as before were assigned to the rifle divisions for reinforcing the rifle subunits. The experience of the battles in Stalingrad showed that the greatest success was achieved where the flamethrowers fought together with the combat engineers under the cover of the firearms of the rifle subunits.

The flamethrower tank units usually operated with the close infantry support tank groups. Thus, in the course of the Stalingrad Battle, in December 1942, the 512th Separate Flamethrower Tank Battalion attached to the 24th Rifle Division of the 65th Army, in advancing as part of a close infantry support tank group, attacked an enemy strongpoint in the region of the population point of Baburkin. At the beginning of the battle, the flamethrower tanks fought in the second line behind the line tanks. With the arrival of the latter in the area of the enemy fortified positions, the flamethrower tanks moved up into the spaces between the line tanks and began flamethrowing the trenches. After the first flamethrower volleys the Nazis retreated in panic.⁶ In the second half of 1943, the flamethrower tank units more and more frequently began to be used as part of the forward detachments.

In the second period of the war, in the course of offensive operations, the static flamethrowers began to be used basically for reinforcing the captured lines (bridgeheads), for securing the boundaries and flanks and for repelling counterattacks by enemy tanks and infantry. The ORFO which were assigned to the rifle formations were included, as a rule, in the general reserve of the

division (corps). The small subunits from the static flamethrower units were employed for fighting as part of assault groups. In this instance, if the situation permitted, the flamethrowers were set up ahead of time in front of the object to be attacked during darkness. In daylight the flamethrowers were set up under the cover of a smokescreen with secure fire support from the rifle subunits. Flamethrowing was carried out directly prior to the attack (assault) on the object. The companies which were part of the reserve moved up behind the battle formations of the rifle troops ready to reinforce the captured lines (bridgeheads).

Combat experience showed the advisability of massing the static flamethrowers for creating a broad flamethrowing front and for increasing the depth of the area occupied by the flamethrower subunits. In line with this, in the spring of 1943, they began to enlarge the static flamethrower units by forming separate flamethrower battalions. This broadened the opportunities for the combat employment of the flamethrower units.

By the end of 1943, in individual operations there was a tendency for an even larger massing of the static flamethrowers by creating groups of two or three flamethrower battalions. Such temporary formations were attached to the all-arms and tank armies. The effectiveness of their combat actions can be judged from the experience of the battles for the bridgeheads on the Dnepr. For example, in the course of the Kiev Operation by the troops of the First Ukrainian Front, a group consisting of the 2d, 3d and 4th Separate Motorized Antitank Flamethrower Battalions attached to the 3d Guards Tank Army, during the period from 8 through 12 November 1943, covered the army's left flank. In the following defensive operation, the 1st and 2d Separate Motorized Antitank Flamethrower Battalions were employed as a mobile reserve of the front. In fighting consecutively in the zones of the 40th, 38th and 60th Armies, the flamethrower battalions took up the defensive in the region of Vasilkov, Yastrebenka, Rozhev, Malin and Chernyakhov, reinforcing the antitank defenses of the all-arms units.⁷

The effective combat employment of the backpack and static flamethrowers in the course of the war grew not only with the use of new tactical procedures but also due to their technical improvement. In 1942-1943, the flamethrower units began receiving new, more advanced models of the backpack flamethrower (ROKS-3) and the static flamethrower (FOG-2). In the second period of the war, the flamethrower tanks completed conversion to the new flamethrower, the AT0-42. The improved operating characteristics of the flamethrowers and their increased reliability ensured greater results in combat.

During the third period of the Great Patriotic War, the greatest use of the backpack flamethrowers occurred in storming population points and strong defensive structures. Small groups of flamethrower troops (3-10 flamethrowers) were included as part of the assault groups, in assisting them in eliminating permanent structures, strongpoints, firing positions and other objects. Thus, in the Berlin Operation, in fighting as part of the troops of the First Ukrainian Front in the region of the city of Troppau, the flamethrower troops of the 38th Separate Backpack Flamethrower Battalion of the 75th Assault Brigade successfully stormed the strong reinforced concrete structures which had withstood direct fire by 152- and 203-mm weapons. Using shelters on the terrain, the

flamethrower troops in pairs with the sub-machine gunners covering them advanced toward several embrasures. The sub-machine gunners fired at the embrasures while the flamethrowers, coming to a range of 18-20 m from the target, made several flamethrower bursts. During the flamethrowing (or after it), combat engineers laid charges of 100-250 kg under the walls of the structures and made two or three explosions. After flamethrowing and the explosions, the garrisons of the structures ceased resistance.⁸ The flamethrower troops from the 47th Separate Flamethrower Battalion fought in a similar manner in eliminating the enemy strongpoints of Steinau, while the troops of the 41st Separate Flamethrower Battalion fought in the battles for the suburb of Warsaw, Praga, and during the storming actions in Poznan.⁹

The static flamethrower battalions were assigned to prepare for tank and infantry attacks and to participate in destroying surrounded enemy groupings. Together with the tank reserves and combat engineers, they fought against counterattacking enemy tanks.

The flamethrower preparation for an attack was carried out under conditions when the distance between the positions of the Soviet troops and the enemy was less than 100 m. This impeded the suppression of the Nazi subunits on the forward edge during the period of our artillery softening up due to the danger of hitting our troops. In these instances, the static flamethrowers were set up in our first trench or in front of it and flamethrowing was carried out immediately prior to the rush of the rifle subunits into the attack. Thus, during the Budapest Offensive Operation, the 5th Separate Motorized Flamethrowing Battery on 19 and 20 November 1944 supported the attacks of the 214th Guards Rifle Regiment from the 73d Guards Rifle Division in the region of Batina on the western bank of the Danube River. Some 70-100 static flamethrowers were set up on a front of 1,100-1,200 m and at the end of the artillery softening up were operated. As a result, the enemy abandoned the positions and our troops advanced without losses.¹⁰

Thus, the basic ways for increasing the effective combat employment of the flamethrower units and subunits during the war years were: creating an optimum organization and establishment which ensured maneuverability, sufficient fire power, flexibility of control and rational breaking up in allocating the units to the subunits and units of the rifle troops; the creation of groups of several flamethrower units for carrying out individual tasks in the interests of the formations (field forces); the technical improvement of the existing models of flamethrowers and the development of new ones; the development and improvement of the battle formations for the flamethrower units and formations as well as the combat procedures of the individual or small groups of flamethrowers; improving the methods of cooperation with the rifle and engineer troops as well as with the artillery.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ The specifications of flamethrowers were given in VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 1, 1976, p 79.

- ² TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio M30, inv. 11170, file 4, sheets 374-375; folio 340, inv. 5405, file 1, sheets 71, 229, 240.
- ³ Ibid., folio 48, inv. 484, file 1, sheet 65; file 5, sheet 107.
- ⁴ Ibid., folio 208, inv. 2536, file 3, sheet 481.
- ⁵ Ibid., file 48, inv. 484, file 3, sheets 4, 5; file 4, sheet 11; file 5, sheet 34.
- ⁶ Ibid., folio 512 ootb, inv. 181047, file 14, sheet 1.
- ⁷ Ibid., folio 1 omptob, inv. 116836, file 4, sheets 43-55; folio 2 omptob, inv. 97486, file 4, sheets 30, 37-50.
- ⁸ Ibid., folio 38 obro, inv. 349590, file 1, sheet 25.
- ⁹ For combat in taking the fortress of Praga, the 41st Separate Flamethrower Battalion received the honorary name of "Praga," and for valor and courage in the storming of Poznan it was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.
- ¹⁰ TsAMO, folio 5 omtob, inv. 17948, file 1, sheets 44, 51, 53.

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